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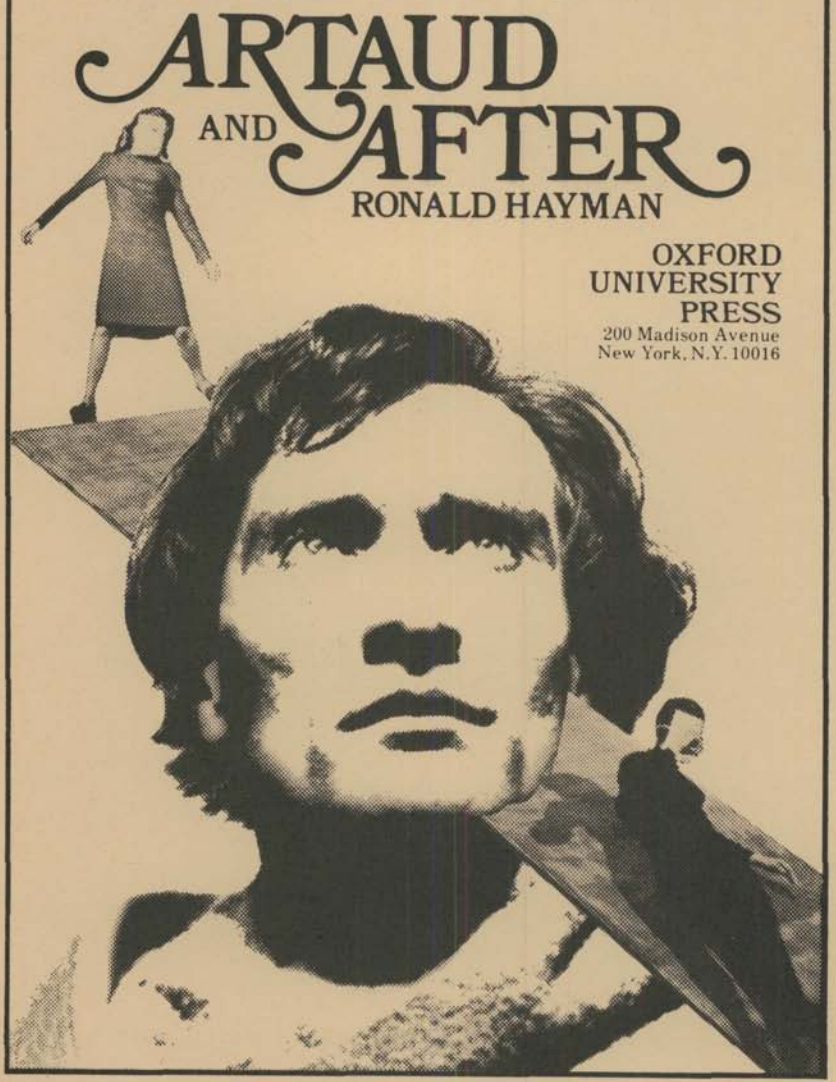

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NOTES

WALTER BENJAMIN, 1892–1940, a German-Jewish literary critic and essayist, emigrated to France as a refugee from Hitler's Germany. He committed suicide when his attempt to leave occupied France for the United States failed. A critical edition of his collected works is currently being published in Germany. . . . **EDMUND JEPHCOTT** is a professor at the School of European Studies, the University of Sussex, England. . . . A resident of London, **RONALD HAYMAN** is the author of *Artaud and After*, *Tom Stoppard*, and *How to Read a Play*. His critical biography of de Sade will be published this summer. **DANIEL BELL** is Professor of Sociology at Harvard. A version of his essay in this issue will appear as the forward to the paperback edition of *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, which will be published in the fall by Basic Books. . . . **SIV CEDERING FOX**'s latest collection of poetry, *Color Poems*, is due to be published shortly. . . . A painter and sculptor, **JULES OLITSKI** is writing a novel tentatively titled *An Artist of Our Time (or The Horse's Ass)*. . . . **MARK PERAKH** was born in Kiev, holds degrees in chemistry and engineering, and has been teaching at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, after serving a prison term in Siberia. . . . **ART LANGE** edits a poetry magazine in Chicago called *Brilliant Corners*. His most recent book is *Monk Poems*, published by Frontward Books. . . . **BERNADETTE MAYER** is a co-editor of the magazine *United Artists*. Her latest books are *Memory*, *Poetry*, and *Erudition Ex Memoria*. . . . **CHARLES HASELOFF,** who has had poems published in many magazines and anthologies, tells us that he has been riding New York buses, subways, and the Staten Island ferry for twenty-six years. . . . A Chicago-based magazine writer, **ETHEL GOFEN** has also written children's educational shows. This is her first published poem. . . . **ANDREW ROSENHEIM** is an associate editor of *Politics* magazine. He is currently studying at Oxford. . . . The University of Texas Press has just published **GILBERT SORRENTINO**'s book of poems, *The Orangery*, and Grove Press will publish his novel, *Synthetic Ink*, in the spring of 1979. . . . **CECIL BROWN** has been writing for the movies. His most recent project is *Which Way is Up?*, an adaptation of *The Seduction of Mimi* for Richard Pryor. Mr. Brown is also writing a novel about Hollywood. . . . **LUIS HARSS** is an Argentine, born in Chile. He has published novels and essays in English and Spanish, and he currently teaches at West Virginia University. . . . **LEONARD SCHAPIRO** teaches at the London School of Economics. . . . **DONALD MARSHALL** is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Iowa. His main interests are the history of criticism and Vienna from 1890–1940. . . . **MARTIN JAY** teaches history at Berkeley. He is the author of *The Dialectical Imagination*, and he is currently working on a study of Western Marxism and the concept of totality.

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Walter Benjamin

CONVERSATIONS WITH BRECHT: SVENDBORG NOTES

1934

4th July. A long conversation in Brecht's sick-room at Svendborg yesterday revolved round my essay "The Author as Producer." The theory it develops (that a decisive criterion for a revolutionary function of literature lies in the state of technical progress, which points to a revised function of art-forms and so of the intellectual means of production) Brecht would only accept with regard to a single type, the upper-middle-class writer, among whom he counts himself. "Such a writer," he says, "does indeed enjoy solidarity with the interests of the proletariat at one point: where the development of his own means of production is concerned. But in feeling solidarity at this one point, he is at this point, as producer, proletarianized, and utterly so. This complete proletarianization at one point, however, brings about solidarity with the proletariat on the entire front." My criticism of proletarian writers of Becher's type Brecht found too abstract. He tried to improve it by an analysis of the poem by Becher printed in one of the latest numbers of one of the official proletarian literary journals under the title "I say in all frankness .'.'." Brecht compared it on one hand with his didactic poem on the art of acting written for Carola Neher, and on the other with *Bateau ivre.* "I taught Carola Neher a number of things," he said. "She not only learned how to act, but how to wash, for example. For she used to wash in order not to be dirty. There was no question of that. I taught her how to wash one's face. She then brought this to such perfection that I wanted to film her doing it. But this came to nothing because at that time I was unwilling to film, and she unwilling to be filmed by anyone else. This didactic poem was a model. Every pupil was intended to put himself in the place of the 'I'. When Becher says 'I', he believes himself—as President of the Union of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers in Germany—exemplary. Only no one wants to follow the example. One gathers simply that he is pleased

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with himself." Brecht said on this occasion that he had long intended to write a series of such model poems for different professions—engineer, writer. On the other hand Brecht compares Becher's poem to Rimbaud's. In the latter, he thought, Marx, and Lenin, too, had they read it, would have detected the great historical movement of which it is an expression. They would have recognized very clearly that it does not describe the perambulations of an eccentric stroller, but the vagabond flight of a person who can no longer endure the limits of his class, which, with the Crimean War, the Mexican adventure, was beginning to open up exotic parts of the world to its mercantile interests. To assimilate the gesture of the unfettered vagabond, putting his affairs in the hands of chance and turning his back on society, to the stereotype of the proletarian fighter, was patently impossible.

6th July. Brecht, in the course of yesterday's conversation:

> I often think of a tribunal before which I am being questioned. 'What was that? Do you really mean that seriously?' I would then have to admit: not quite seriously. After all I think too much about artistic matters, about what would go well on the stage, to be quite serious; but when I have answered this important question in the negative, I will add a still more important affirmation: that my conduct is *legitimate.*

This formulation, it is true, came later in the conversation. Brecht had begun with doubts not of the legitimacy but of the effectiveness of his procedure. With a sentence that arose from some remarks I had made on Gerhart Hauptmann: "I sometimes wonder whether they are not, after all, the only writers who really achieve anything: the *writers of substance,* I mean." By this Brecht means writers who are entirely serious. And to explain this idea he starts from the fiction that Confucius had written a tragedy or Lenin a novel. One would think this inadmissible, he declares, conduct unworthy of them. "Let us suppose that you read an excellent political novel and afterwards find out it is by Lenin; your opinion of both would be changed, and to the disadvantage of both. Nor would Confucius be allowed to write a play by Euripides, it would be thought undignified. Yet his parables are not." In short, all this points to a distinction between two literary types: on one hand, the visionary who is serious, and on the other hand, the reflective man who is not quite serious. Here I raise the question of Kafka. To which of the two groups does he belong? I know: the question cannot be decided. And precisely this is for Brecht a sign that Kafka, whom he considers a great writer, like Kleist, Grabbe or

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Büchner, is a failure. His starting point is really the parable, which is responsible to reason and therefore, as far as its wording is concerned, cannot be entirely serious. But this parable is then subject to artistic elaboration. It grows into a novel. And, strictly speaking, it carried the germ of one from the start. It was never quite transparent. Moreover, Brecht is convinced that Kafka would not have found his own form without Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor and the other parabolic passage in the *Brothers Karamazov* where the corpse of Saint Starets begins to stink. In Kafka, therefore, parable is in conflict with vision. But as a visionary, Brecht says, Kafka saw what was to come without seeing what is. He [Lavandou] stresses, as he had done earlier in Le Lavandou, but, to me, more clearly, the prophetic side of his work. Kafka, he says, had only one problem, that of organization. What seized him was fear of the ant-colony state: how people become estranged from themselves by the forms of their communal life. And certain forms of this estrangement he foresaw, for example the procedure of the G.P.U. He did not, however, find a solution, and did not wake from his nightmare. Of Kafka's precision Brecht says it is that of someone vague, a dreamer.

12th July. Yesterday after a game of chess Brecht said: "If Korsch comes we shall have to work out a new game with him. A game in which the positions do not always remain the same; where the function of the pieces changes if they have stood for a while on the same square: then they become either more effective or weaker. Like this, the game does not develop; it stays the same too long."

23rd July. Yesterday a visit by Karin Michaelis, who is just back from her Russian journey and full of enthusiasm. Brecht recalls his guide Tretiakov, who showed him Moscow, proud of everything his guest saw, no matter what. "That is no bad thing," says Brecht, "it shows that it belongs to him. No one is proud of other people's property." After a while he adds: "Well, in the end I did get a bit tired. I could not admire everything, nor did I want to. It's like this: they are his soldiers, his trucks. But, unfortunately, not mine."

24th July. On a beam supporting the ceiling of Brecht's study are painted the words: "Truth is concrete." On a window sill stands a little wooden donkey that can nod its head. Brecht has hung a little notice round its neck saying: "I too must understand it."

5th August. Three weeks ago I gave B. my essay on Kafka. He certainly read it, but never spoke about it of his own accord and both times I brought the conversation round to it, replied evasively. Finally I took back the manuscript without a word. Yesterday evening he

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suddenly came back to this essay. The transition to it, somewhat abrupt and breakneck, was effected by the comment that I too could not be entirely absolved from the reproach of a diarist's style of writing, in the manner of Nietzsche. My Kafka essay, for example (Brecht was concerned with Kafka merely from the phenomenal aspect) took the work as something that had grown by itself, severed all its connections, even that with its author. It was always the question of *essence* that finally interested me. Whereas such a matter ought to be approached by asking the question of Kafka: what does he do? how does he behave? And by looking in the first place rather at the general than the particular. It then emerges that he lived in Prague in a bad *milieu* of journalists and self-important *literati*; in this world literature was the main if not the only reality. With this attitude Kafka's strengths and weaknesses are connected; his artistic value, but also his manifold futility. He is a Jew-boy—as one might also coin the term Aryan-boy—a skinny, unlikeable creature, a bubble on the iridescent morass of Prague culture, nothing more. Nevertheless, he also has certain very interesting sides. They could be brought out; one would have to imagine a conversation between Laotse and his disciple Kafka. Laotse says: "Well now, disciple Kafka, the organizations, the leaseholds and other economic forms in which you live make you uneasy? Yes. You can't cope with them any more? No. A share-certificate worries you? Yes. And now you are looking for a leader to hold on to, disciple Kafka?" That is of course despicable, says Brecht. I reject Kafka. And he goes on to talk of a parable of a Chinese philosopher on "the pains of usefulness." In the forest there are various kinds of tree-trunks. From the thickest, beams for ships are cut; from less thick but still respectable trunks box lids and coffin sides are made; the very thin ones are used for rods; but nothing comes of the stunted ones—they escape the pains of usefulness. "In what Kafka wrote you have to look round as in such a forest. You will then find a number of very useful things. The images are good. But the rest is obscurantism. It is sheer mischief. You have to ignore it. Depth takes you no further. Depth is a dimension of its own, just depth—which is why nothing comes to light in it." I explain to B. in conclusion that plumbing the depths is my way of going to the antipodes. In my essay on Kraus I did indeed come out there. I know that the one on Kafka was not so successful: I could not rebut the charge that it consisted of diary-like notes. Discussion within the frontier zone designated by Kraus, and in another way by Kafka, did indeed interest me. I had not yet, I said, explored this area in Kafka's case. That it contained a good deal of rubbish and detritus, much real obscurantism, I fully realized. Nevertheless, other aspects were more

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decisive, and I had touched on a number of them in my essay. B.'s critical approach must, after all, prove itself in the interpretation of the particular. I open "The Next Village." At once I was able to observe the conflict produced in B. by this suggestion. Eisler's remark that this story was "worthless" he rejected emphatically. On the other hand he was equally unable to explain its value. "It would need close study," he thought. Then the conversation broke off; it was ten o'clock and the radio news was on the air from Vienna.

31st August. The day before yesterday we had a long and heated debate on my Kafka article. Its basis: the accusation that it advanced Jewish fascism. It increased and propagated the obscurity surrounding this author instead of dispersing it. Whereas it was of crucial importance to clarify Kafka, that is, to formulate practicable proposals that can be derived from his stories. That proposals were derivable from them could be supposed, if only from the serene calm of their stance. However, these suggestions would have to be sought in the direction of the great general abuses afflicting present-day humanity. Brecht tries to show their imprint in Kafka's work. He confines himself chiefly to *The Trial.* There above all, he thinks, we find the fear of the unending and irresistible growth of cities. He claims to know from personal experience the crushing weight of this phenomenon on human beings. The inexplicable mediations, dependencies, entanglements besetting men as a result of their present form of existence, find expression in these cities. They find expression in another way in the desire for a "Leader," who for the petty-bourgeois represents the man whom—in a world where blame can be passed from one person to the next so that everyone escapes it—he can hold accountable for all his misfortunes. Brecht calls *The Trial* a prophetic book. "What can become of the Cheka . . . you can see from the Gestapo." Kafka's perspective is that of the man who has gone to the dogs. Odradek is characteristic of this: the care of the father of the house Brecht interprets as the caretaker. Things must go wrong for the petty-bourgeois. His situation is Kafka's. But whereas the type of the petty-bourgeois current today—that is, the fascist—decides in face of this situation to exert his iron, indomitable will, Kafka hardly resists; he is wise. Where the fascist imposes heroism, he poses questions. He asks for guarantees of his situation. But the latter is so constituted that the guarantees would have to exceed all reasonable measure. It is a Kafkaesque irony that the man who seemed convinced of nothing more than of the invalidity of all guarantees was an insurance official. Moreover, his unrestricted pessimism is free of any tragic sense of fate. For not only has his expectation of misfortune a solely empirical foundation—albeit a perfect one—but he places the

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criterion of final success with incorrigible naiveté in the most trivial and banal of enterprises: the visit of a commercial traveller or an application to an authority. The conversation concentrated at times on the story "The Next Village." Brecht declares it a counterpart to the story of Achilles and the tortoise. Someone who composes the ride from its smallest particles (leaving aside all incidents) will never reach the next village. Life itself is too short for such a ride. But the error lies in the "someone." For just as the ride is deceptive, so too is the rider. And just as the unity of life is now done away with, so too is its brevity. No matter how brief it may be. This makes no difference, because a different person than he who started the ride arrives at the village. For my part I give the following interpretation: the true measure of life is remembrance. Retrospectively, it traverses life with the speed of lightning. As quickly as one turns back a few pages, it has gone back from the next village to the point where the rider decided to set out. He whose life has turned into writing, like old people's, likes to read this writing only backwards. Only so does he meet himself, and only so—in flight from the present—can his life be understood.

27th September, Dragør. In a conversation one evening a few days ago Brecht explained the curious indecision which at present prevents him from making definite plans. The first reason for this indecision is, as he emphasizes himself, the advantages distinguishing his personal situation from that of most emigrants. If in this he scarcely acknowledges emigration in general as the basis of undertakings and plans, any such conception of it in his particular case is all the more irrevocably abolished. His plans have a wider compass. This presents him with a choice. On one hand prose projects are waiting. The smaller one on *Ui*—a satire on Hitler in the style of the historiographers of the Renaissance—and the big project of the Tui-novel. The Tui-novel is intended to give an encyclopaedic survey of the follies of the Tellectual-Ins (intellectuals); it will, it seems, take place at least in part in China. A small model for this work is ready. But besides these prose plans he is claimed by projects which go back to very old studies and reflections. And while it was just possible to include the reflections that originated in connection with epic theater in the notes and introductions to the *Versuche*, ideas that arose from the same interests, but were later combined with the study of Leninism on one hand and with the scientific tendencies of the empiricists on the other, have outgrown so restricted a framework. For years they have been grouped now under this, now under that heading, so that in turn non-Aristotelian logic, behavior theory, the new encyclopaedia, the critique

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of ideas, moved to the center of Brecht's endeavors. These different activities are converging at present in the idea of a philosophical didactic poem. Brecht's scruples originate in the question whether—in view of his whole previous production, but especially its satirical part and above all the *Threepenny Novel*—he would find the necessary credit with the public for such an approach. In this doubt two different trains of thought come together. On one hand there are the misgivings to which, the more intense Brecht's concern with the problems and methods of the proletarian class-struggle became, the satirical and even more the ironic standpoint must as such be exposed. These misgivings—of a primarily practical nature—would, however, be misunderstood if they were identified with other, more fundamental considerations. This deeper layer of scruples concerns the artistic and playful element in literature, but above all those moments which sometimes, in part, make themselves refractory to reason. These heroic efforts of Brecht to legitimize art to reason have thrown him back time and again on the parable, in which artistic mastery is proved by the final abolition in it of all elements of art. And it is just this concern with parable that is now prominent in more radical form in the considerations surrounding the didactic poem. In the course of the conversation itself I tried to explain to Brecht that such a didactic poem would have to justify itself less to the bourgeois public than to the proletarian, which would presumably take its criteria less from Brecht's earlier, partly bourgeois-oriented production than from the dogmatic and theoretical content of the didactic poetry itself. "If this didactic poem is able to mobilize for itself the authority of Marxism," I told him, "the fact of your earlier production will hardly shake it."

4th October, 1934. Yesterday Brecht left for London. Whether he is now and then particularly tempted by me, or whether he has recently become generally more prone to it than earlier: what he himself called the "baiting" stance of his thought is now far more noticeable in conversation than earlier. Indeed, I am struck by a particular term that stems from this attitude. He is especially fond of using the concept of "nobodies" with great intent. In Dragør I read *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoyevsky. First of all he blamed this as the chief cause of my illness. And to back up his argument he told me how in his youth a protracted illness, the germ of which he had probably carried for a long time, had broken out when, one afternoon, already too weak to protest, he had listened to a school-fellow playing Chopin on the piano. Brecht attributes to Chopin and Dostoyevsky an especially detrimental influence on health. But he took up every other possible position against my

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reading as well, and as he was himself at the same time reading *Schweik*, he did not miss the opportunity of comparing the value of the two authors. At all events, Dostoyevsky could not hold a candle to Hasek, but was rather consigned unceremoniously to the "nobodies," and he was doubtless close to extending to his work the term that he holds ready of late for all writings which lack, or to which he denies, an enlightening character. He calls them "clods."

1938

28th June. I found myself in a labyrinth of staircases. This labyrinth was not everywhere roofed. I climbed up; other stairways led downwards. On one landing I found myself standing on a summit. A wide prospect opened across the country. I saw others standing on other peaks. One of these was suddenly gripped by vertigo and plunged down. The giddiness spread; other people now fell from other summits into the depths. When I too was seized by this feeling, I woke up.

On June 22nd I arrived at Brecht's.

Brecht points to a nonchalant elegance in the posture of Virgil and Dante, describing it as the background against which Virgil's grand gesture stands out. He called them both *promeneurs.* He stresses the classical status of the *Inferno:* "You can read it in the country."

Brecht speaks of his inveterate hatred of clergymen, inherited from his grandmother. He insinuates that those who have adopted the theoretical doctrines of Marx, doctored to suit themselves, will always form a clerical camarilla. Marxism lends itself far too easily to "interpretation." It is a hundred years old and has been shown . . . (at this point we are interrupted). "'The state must be abolished' Who says that? The State." (Here he can only mean the Soviet Union.) Brecht comes and stands in an artful, crushed posture in front of the armchair in which I am sitting—he is imitating "the state"—and says, with a sidelong squint at imaginary clients: "'I know, I *ought* to be abolished'."

A conversation on the modern Soviet novel. We have given up following it. We then turn to poetry and to the translations of Soviet lyric poetry from the most diverse languages with which *Das Wort* is inundated. Brecht remarks that the authors over there are having a difficult time. "It is taken as deliberate if the name Stalin does not appear in a poem."

29th June. Brecht talks of the epic theater; he mentions the children's theater in which errors of presentation, functioning as

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alienation-effects, give the performance epic features. With small companies something similar can happen. I recall the Geneva performance of *Le Cid*, at which the sight of the King's crooked crown gave me the first idea for the book on tragedy which I wrote nine years later. Here Brecht on his side quotes the moment in which the idea of epic theater is rooted. It was a rehearsal for the Munich performance of *Edward II*. The battle that occurs in the play has to hold the stage for three-quarters of an hour. Brecht could not cope with the soldiers. (Nor could Asja [Lacis], his assistant director.) He finally turned to Valentin, a close friend of his at that time who was attending the rehearsal, with the despairing question: "Well, what *is* the matter with the soldiers?" Valentin: "They're pale—they're afraid." This was the decisive remark. Brecht added: "They're tired." The soldiers' faces were given a thick coat of chalk. And on that day the style was discovered.

Shortly afterwards, the old theme of logical positivism came up. I was fairly intransigent, and the conversation threatened to take a disagreeable turn. This was prevented by Brecht's admitting for the first time the superficiality of his formulations. He did so with the fine dictum: "A deep need must be approached superficially." Later, when we went over to his house (for the conversation had taken place in my room) he said: "It is a good thing to be overtaken in an extreme position by a reactionary epoch. That way you reach a middle position." This, he said, was what had happened to him; he had become benevolent.

In the evening: I should like to give someone a small present for Asja; gloves. Brecht thinks it would be difficult. The view could be taken that Jahnn was rewarding her for spy services with two gloves.

1st July. Very sceptical answers are elicited whenever I touch on conditions in Russia. When I enquired recently whether Ottwald was still in prison, the answer was: "If he's still alive, he's in prison." Yesterday Steffin said she doubted whether Tretiakov was still alive.

4th July. Yesterday evening. Brecht (in a conversation on Baudelaire): "I'm not against the asocial—I'm against the nonsocial."

21st July. The publications of writers like Lukács and Kurella cause Brecht much concern. He thinks, however, that they should not be opposed in the theoretical area. I switch the question to the political area. Here too he does not mince his words. "The socialist economy does not need war and therefore has no stomach for it. The 'peaceloving' disposition of the 'Russian people' means no more than that. There can be no socialist economy in one country. Arms production has necessarily been a severe setback for the Russian proletariat; in

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some areas it has pushed them back to stages of historical development they had long left behind. The monarchist stage among others. In Russia a personal regime is in power. That, of course, can be denied only by blockheads." This short conversation was soon interrupted. Moreover, Brecht stressed in this connection that with the dissolution of the First International, Marx and Engels lost contact with the workers' movement and henceforth sent only private advice, not intended for publication, to individual leaders. Nor was it by chance—though regrettable—that Engels finally turned to natural science.

Béla Kun was, he said, his greatest admirer in Russia. Brecht and Heine were the only German lyric poets he favored. (Brecht occasionally alluded to a certain man in the Central Committee who supported him.)

25th July. Yesterday morning Brecht came over to show me his Stalin poem, entitled "The Farmer to his Oxen." At first I could not see the point; and when, after a moment, the thought of Stalin crossed my mind I did not dare hold on to it. This effect corresponded roughly to Brecht's intention. He explained it in the ensuing conversation, stressing, among other things, the positive moment in the poem. It did indeed pay tribute to Stalin who, in his view, had immense merits. But he was not yet dead. Moreover he, Brecht, was not entitled to pay any other, more enthusiastic tribute; he was in exile waiting for the Red Army. He was following Russian developments; and equally the writings of Trotsky. They prove that grounds for suspicion exist; justified suspicion that called for a sceptical view of Russian affairs. Such scepticism was in the spirit of the classical writers. Should the suspicions one day be confirmed, one would have to oppose the regime—and that means *publicly*. But, "alas, or thank God, whichever you prefer," this suspicion was not yet a certainty. To derive a policy like Trotsky's from it would be irresponsible. "On the other hand, the fact that certain criminal cliques are at work in Russia itself is beyond doubt. It can be seen periodically from their misdeeds." Finally Brecht emphasized that we were injured inwardly by this regression. "We have paid for our position; we are covered in scars. It is natural that we are also particularly sensitive."

Towards evening Brecht found me in the garden reading—*Das Kapital*. Brecht: "I am very pleased to see you studying Marx now—at a time when he is less and less in evidence, above all among our people." I replied that I preferred to read much-discussed books when they were out of fashion. We went on to talk about Russian policy towards literature. "With these people," I said, referring to Lukács, Gabor, Kurella, "you just cannot build a state." Brecht: "Or *only* a state, but

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not a community. They are quite simply enemies of production. Production makes them uneasy. It can't be trusted. It is the unpredictable. You never know where it will end. And they themselves do not want to produce. They want to play the apparatchik and supervise others. *Each of their criticisms contains a threat.*" We found ourselves, I do not know how, discussing Goethe's novels; Brecht only knows the *Elective Affinities*. In it, he said, he had admired the elegance of the young man. When I told him that Goethe wrote the book at sixty he was very surprised. The book was entirely without philistinism. That was an immense achievement. He could applaud this since German drama, even in the most important works, bore philistine traces. I remarked that as a result the *Elective Affinities* had had a miserable reception. Brecht: "I'm glad to hear it. The Germans are a dreadful people. It is not true that you cannot draw conclusions about the Germans from Hitler. In me, too, everything is bad that is German. What makes Germans unbearable is their narrow-minded self-sufficiency. Nothing like the free imperial cities, e.g. the detestable town of Augsburg, ever existed elsewhere. Lyons was never a free city; the independent cities of the Renaissance were city-states—Lukács is an adoptive German. He has almost completely run out of wind."

In the *Best Tales of the Robber Woynok* by Seghers, Brecht praised the signs it gave that she had freed herself from her commission. "Seghers cannot write to a commission, just as I, without one, would have no idea how to start." He also approved the central role given in these stories to a stubborn outsider.

26th July. Brecht yesterday evening: "There is no longer any doubt—the struggle against ideology has become a new ideology."

29th July. Brecht reads me a number of polemical disputes with Lukács, studies for an essay that he is to publish in *Das Wort*. They are disguised but vehement attacks. Brecht asks my advice concerning their publication. Since he tells me at the same time that Lukács now has an important position "over there," I say that I cannot advise him. "These are questions of power. Someone over there ought to say something. After all, you have friends there." Brecht: "Actually I have no friends there. The Muscovites haven't any either—like the dead."

3rd August. In the evening of July 29th, in the garden, a discussion arose on the question whether a part of the cycle "Children's Songs" should be included in the new volume of poems. I was not in favor, because I thought the contrast between the political and private poem expressed the experience of exile particularly clearly; this effect should not be weakened by a disparate collection. I hinted that in his proposal Brecht's destructive character, which calls into question what

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has scarcely been achieved, was once again involved. Brecht: "I know people will say of me 'he was a manic'. If this age goes down to posterity, understanding for my mania will go down with it. The age will provide the background for manic tendencies. But what I should really like is that people should one day say: he was a *moderate* manic." Recognition of his moderation should not be neglected in the volume of poems: that life, despite Hitler, goes on, that there will always be children. Brecht thinks of an age without history, of which his poem to sculptors gives a portrait, and of which he told me a few days later that he thought its arrival more likely than victory over fascism. But then, still as an argument for the inclusion of the "Children's Songs" in the "Poems from Exile," something else asserted itself, that Brecht expressed as he stood before me in the grass, with a passion he seldom shows. "In the fight against them nothing must be omitted. Their intentions are not trivial. They are planning for the next thirty thousand years. Monstrous. Monstrous crimes. They stop at nothing. They hit out at everything. Every cell flinches under their blows. That is why not one of us can be forgotten. They deform the baby in the mother's womb. We must under no circumstances leave out the children." While he spoke I felt a force acting on me which was equal to that of Fascism; I mean a power that has its source no less deep in history than Fascism. It was a very curious feeling, new to me. It was matched by the direction Brecht's thought now took. "They are planning devastation of icy proportions. That is why they cannot come to an agreement with the Church, which is also a march into millennia. They have proletarianized me as well. They have not only taken away my house, my fishpond and my car, they have stolen my theater and my public. From my standpoint I cannot admit that Shakespeare was fundamentally a greater talent. But he too would have been unable to write from stock. He had his models in front of him. The people he portrayed were actually there. He managed with great difficulty to snatch up a few characteristics of their behavior; many equally important ones he left out."

Beginning of August. "In Russia a dictatorship is in power *over* the proletariat. We must avoid disowning it for as long as this dictatorship still does practical work for the proletariat; that is, as long as it contributes to a balance between proletariat and peasantry with a preponderant regard for proletarian interests." Some days later Brecht spoke of a "workers' monarchy" and I compared this organism to the grotesque jokes of nature which, in the form of a horned fish or some other monster, are extracted from the ocean.

25th August. A Brechtian maxim: Do not build on the good old days, but on the bad new ones.

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DAGUERRE, OR THE PANORAMAS

Soleil, prends garde à toi!
A. J. Wiertz, *Oeuvres littéraires*
(Paris 1870)

As architecture begins to outgrow art in the use of iron construction, so does painting in the panoramas. The climax of the preparation of panoramas coincides with the appearance of the arcades. There were tireless exertions of technical skill to make panoramas the scenes of a perfect imitation of nature. The attempt was made to reproduce the changing time of day in the landscape, the rising of the moon, the rushing of waterfalls. David advises his pupils to draw from nature in the panoramas. In striving to produce deceptively lifelike changes in their presentation of nature, the panoramas point ahead, beyond photography, to films and sound films.

Contemporary to the panoramas is a panoramic literature. *Le livre des cent-et-un, Les Français peints par eux-mêmes, Le diable à Paris, La grande ville* are part of it. In these books is being prepared the collective literary work for which, in the thirties, Girardin created an arena in the *feuilleton*. They consist of isolated sketches, the anecdotal form of which corresponds to the plastic foreground of the panorama, and their informational base to its painted background. This literature is also panoramic in a social sense. For the last time the worker appears, outside his class, as a trimming for an idyll.

The panoramas, which declare a revolution in the relation of art to technology, are at the same time an expression of a new feeling about life. The city dweller, whose political superiority over the country is expressed in many ways in the course of the century, attempts to introduce the countryside into the city. In the panoramas the city dilates to become landscape, as it does in a subtler way for the *flâneur*. Daguerre is a pupil of the panorama painter Prévost, whose establishment is situated in the Passage des Panoramas. Description of the panoramas by Prévost and Daguerre. In 1839 Daguerre's panorama burns down. In the same year he announces the invention of daguerreotype.

Arago introduces photography in an official speech. He indicates its place in the history of technology. He prophesies its scientific

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application. Artists, on the other hand, begin to debate its artistic value. Photography leads to the annihilation of the great profession of the portrait miniaturist. This happens not only for economic reasons. Artistically, early photographs were superior to portrait miniatures. The technical reason lies in the long exposure time, which demanded utmost concentration by the subject being portrayed. The social reason lies in the circumstance that the first photographers belonged to the avant-garde and drew their clientele for the most part from it. Nadar's advance over his professional colleagues is characterized by his undertaking to take photographs in the sewers of Paris. This is the first time that the lens is given the task of making discoveries. Its importance becomes greater the more questionable, in face of the new technical and social reality, the subjective element in painting and graphic information is felt to be.

The World Exhibition of 1855 presents for the first time a special display of photography. In the same year Wiertz publishes his major article on photography, in which he assigns it the task of philosophically enlightening painting. He understood this enlightenment, as his own paintings show, in a political sense. Wiertz can thus be described as the first to have demanded, if not foreseen, montage as a propagandistic application of photography. With the increasing scope of communications systems, the significance of painting in imparting information is reduced. It begins, in reaction against photography, to stress the color elements in pictures. When impressionism gives way to cubism, painting has created for itself a further domain into which photography cannot, for the time being, follow. Photography for its part has, since the middle of the century, enormously expanded the scope of the commodity trade by putting on the market in unlimited quantities figures, landscapes, events that have either not been salable at all or have been available only as pictures for single customers. To increase turnover, it renewed its objects through fashionable changes in photographic technique that determined the later history of photography.

GRANDVILLE, OR THE WORLD EXHIBITIONS

Oui, quand le monde entier, de Paris jusqu'en Chine,
O divin Saint-Simon, sera dans la doctrine,
L'âge d'or doit renaître avec tout son éclat,
Les fleuves rouleront du thé, du chocolat;

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Les moutons tous rôtis bondiront dans la plaine,
Et les brochets au bleu nageront dans la Seine;
Les épinards viendront au monde fricassés,
Avec des croûtons frits tout au tour concassés.
Les arbres produiront des pommes en compotes
Et l'on moissonnera des cerricks et des bottes;
Il neigera du vin, il pleuvera des poulets,
Et du ciel les canards tomberont aux navets.

Lauglé and Vanderbusch, *Louis et le Saint-Simonein* (1832)

World exhibitions are the sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish. "Europe is on the move to look at merchandise," said Taine in 1855. The world exhibtions are preceded by national industrial exhibitions, the first of which takes place in 1798 on the Champ-de-Mars. It proceeds from the wish "to entertain the working classes, and becomes for them a festival of emancipation." The workers stand as cutomers in the foreground. The framework of the entertainment industry has not yet been formed. The popular festival supplies it. Chaptal's speech on industry opens this exhibition. The Saint-Simonists, who plan the industrialization of the earth, take up the idea of world exhibitions. Chevalier, the first authority in the new field, is a pupil of Enfantin and editor of the Saint-Simonist journal, *Globe*. The Saint-Simonists predicted the development of the world economy, but not of the class struggle. Beside their participation in industrial and commercial enterprises about the middle of the century stands their helplessness in questions concerning the proletariat. The world exhibitions glorify the exchange value of commodities. They create a framework in which commodities' intrinsic value is eclipsed. They open up a phantasmagoria that people enter to be amused. The entertainment industry facilitates this by elevating people to the level of commodities. They submit to being manipulated while enjoying their alienation from themselves and others. The enthronement of merchandise, with the aura of amusement surrounding it, is the secret theme of Grandville's art. This is reflected in the discord between its utopian and its cynical elements. Its subtleties in the presentation of inanimate objects correspond to what Marx called the "theological whims" of goods. This is clearly distilled in the term *spécialité*—a commodity description coming into use about this time in the luxury industry; under Grandville's pencil the whole of nature is transformed into *spécialités*. He presents them in the same spirit in which advertising—a word that is also coined at this time—begins to present its articles. He ends in madness.

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Fashion: My dear Mr. Death!
Leopardi, *Dialogue Between Fashion and Death.*

The world exhibitions build up the universe of commodities. Grandville's fantasies extend the character of a commodity to the universe. They modernize it. Saturn's ring becomes a cast-iron balcony on which the inhabitants of the planet take the air in the evening. The literary counterpart of this graphic utopia is presented by the book of the Fourierist natural scientist Toussenal. Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish wishes to be worshiped; Grandville extends fashion's claims both to the objects of everyday use and to the cosmos. By pursuing it to its extremes he discloses its nature. This resides in its conflict with the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. Against the living it asserts the rights of the corpse. Fetishism, which is subject to the sex appeal of the inorganic, is its vital nerve. The cult of commodities places it in its service.

On the occasion of the 1867 World Exhibition, Victor Hugo issues a manifesto: *To the Peoples of Europe.* Earlier, and more unambiguously, their interests had been represented by the French workers' delegations, the first of which had been sent to the London World Exhibition of 1851, and the second, consisting of seven hundred and fifty representatives, to that of 1862. The latter was of indirect importance for the foundation of the International Workingmen's association by Marx. The phantasmagoria of capitalist culture reaches its most brilliant display in the World Exhibition of 1867. The Empire is at the height of its power. Paris reaffirms itself as the capital of luxury and fashion: Offenbach sets the rhythm of Parisian life. The operetta is the ironic utopia of capital's lasting rule.

BAUDELAIRE, OR THE STREETS OF PARIS

Tout pour moi devient Allégorie.
Baudelaire, "*Le cygne*"

Baudelaire's genius; which is fed on melancholy, is an allegorical genius. In Baudelaire Paris becomes for the first time a subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is not regional art; rather, the gaze of the allegorist that falls on the city is estranged. It is the gaze of the *flâneur,* whose mode of life still surrounds the approaching desolation of city life with

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a propitiatory luster. The *flâneur* is still on the threshold, of the city as of the bourgeois class. Neither has yet engulfed him: in neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd. Early contributions to a physiognomics of the crowd are to be found in Engels and Poe. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city lures the *flâneur* like a phantasmagoria. In it the city is now a landscape, now a room. Both, then, constitute the department store that puts even *flânerie* to use for commodity circulation. The department store is the *flâneur*'s last practical joke.

In the *flâneur* the intelligentsia pays a visit to the marketplace, ostensibly to look around, yet in reality to find a buyer. In this intermediate phase, in which it still has patrons but is already beginning to familiarize itself with the market, it appears as bohemianism. The uncertainty of its political function corresponds to the uncertainty of its economic position. This is most strikingly expressed in the professional conspirators, who are certainly a part of Bohemia. Their first field of activity is the army; later it becomes the petit bourgeoisie, occasionally the proletariat. Yet this stratum sees its opponents in the real leaders of the latter. The *Communist Manifesto* put an end to their political existence. Baudelaire's poetry draws its strength from the rebellious emotionalism of this group. He throws his lot in with the asocial. His only sexual communion is realized with a whore.

Facilis descensus Averni
Virgil, *Aeneid*

What is unique in Baudelaire's poetry is that the images of women and death are permeated by a third, that of Paris. The Paris of his poems is a submerged city, more submarine than subterranean. The chthonic elements of the city—its topographical formation, the old deserted bed of the Seine—doubtless left their impression on his work. Yet what is decisive in Baudelaire's "deathly idyll" of the city is a social, modern substratum. Modernity is a main accent in his poetry. He shatters the ideal as spleen (*Spleen et Idéal*). But it is precisely modernity that is always quoting primeval history. This happens here through the ambiguity attending the social relationships and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectic image therefore a dream image. Such an image is presented by the pure commodity: as fetish. Such an image are the arcades, which are both house and stars. Such an image is the prostitute, who is saleswoman and wares in one.

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Le voyage pour découvrir ma géographie
Note of a madman (Paris 1907)

The last poem of the *Flowers of Evil*, "The Journey": "Oh death, old captain, it is time, let us weigh anchor." The last journey of the *flâneur:* death. Its destination: the new. "To the depths of the unknown, there to find something new." Novelty is a quality independent of the intrinsic value of the commodity. It is the origin of the illusion inseverable from the images produced by the collective unconscious. It is the quintessence of false consciousness, whose indefatigable agent is fashion. The illusion of novelty is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the illusion of perpetual sameness. The product of this reflection is the phantasmagoria of "cultural history," in which the bourgeoisie savors its false consciousness to the last. The art that begins to doubt its task and ceases to be "inseparable from utility" (Baudelaire) must make novelty its highest value. The snob becomes its *arbiter novarum rerum*. He is to art what the dandy is to fashion. As in the seventeenth century the canon of dialectical imagery came to be allegory, in the nineteenth it is novelty. The *magasins de nouveauté* are joined by the newspapers. The press organizes the market in intellectual values, in which prices at first soar. Nonconformists rebel against the handing over of art to the market. They gather around the banner of "*l'art pour l'art.*" This slogan springs from the conception of the total artwork, which attempts to isolate art from the development of technology. The solemnity with which it is celebrated is the corrolary to the frivolity that glorifies the commodity. Both abstract from the social existence of man. Baudelaire succumbs to the infatuation of Wagner.

* * *

My good father had been in Paris.
Karl Gutzkow, *Letters from Paris* (1842)

Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie. But only Surrealism exposed them to view. The development of the forces of production reduced the wish symbols of the previous century to rubble even before the monuments representing them had crumbled. In the nineteenth century this development emancipated constructive forms from art, as the sciences freed themselves from philosophy in the sixteenth. Architecture makes a start as constructional engineering. The reproduction of nature in photography follows. Fantasy creation prepares itself to become practical as commercial art. Literature is

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subjected to montage, in the *feuilleton*. All these products are on the point of going to market as wares. But they hesitate on the brink. From this epoch stem the arcades and interiors, the exhibitions and panoramas. They are residues of a dream world. The realization of dream elements in waking is the textbook example of dialectical thinking. For this reason dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it—as Hegel already saw—with ruse. In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled.

—Translated from the German by Edmund Jephcott

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Ronald Hayman

THE BIRTH OF THE MIDDLE-AGED WRITER

The Marquis de Sade would probably never have become a writer if he had not had to spend so much time in prison. As with Genet, the experience which engendered the writing also encouraged habitual masturbation. Fantasies of revenge against society and against women began to revolve around vivid visualizations of other men's penises, punitively large.

After six and a half years in his cell at Vincennes, Sade had nothing he valued more than what was going on in his mind:

> My way of thinking is the fruit of my reflections; it is a part of my existence, my constitution . . . [It] is my only comfort; it alleviates all my sufferings in prison, creates all the pleasures I have in the world and I value it more highly than life.

It was a way of thinking that depended on a rejection—partly involuntary, partly voluntary—of external reality. He had no means of knowing how much distortion there was in the accounts that reached him of what was going on in the world outside his cell; as he wrote retrospectively in 1803, "Wanting peace of mind, I preferred to believe nothing, scoff at everything." This affected the formative period of his development as a novelist. His fiction has little purchase on the objective world of people and things. If you try to read it as realistic narrative, it is boring. As Roland Barthes says, "the spectacle consists entirely of discourse."

He was only twenty-four when he started making notes in the library of the Carthusian monastery at Dijon about Isabel of Bavaria, the subject of the novel he wrote nearly fifty years later. He was twenty-nine when he wrote his *Voyage de Hollande, en forme de lettres*, and thirty-one when he wrote a comedy for performance in his chateau at Lacoste, where he employed professional actors. Then, in about August 1782, he began working on *120 journées de Sodome*. He seems to have started writing more plays in about April 1779, having been arrested in February 1777 at the age of thirty-six after his mother-in-law

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arranged for a *lettre de cachet* to be issued, summarily ordering his imprisonment without trial.

In a letter written in either March or April 1779 he was still complaining to his wife, Renée-Pélagie de Montreuil, that he could have used the time more profitably if only he knew how long his imprisonment would last. But by May he was pressing her for reactions to the dialogue in his scripts. She was to keep the manuscripts in her possession.

Though his playwriting was influenced by plays he read, it was not until the sixth year of his imprisonment that his reading began to interact fruitfully with his writing. Sometimes reading would make him so excited that he would break off to scribble on a scrap of paper.

> Last line page 143
> outrages—a *lettre de cachet!* The most solid proof of stupidity and the best weapon of tyranny. A man who could have emigrated has been made to rot in a cell by the finest invention of despotism . . . *O tempora, o mores!*

or

> they will never be released. It is the characteristic of stupidity and absurdity to use torture instead of reasonable persuasion in the attempt to convince. Persecution proves nothing but despotism; a good cause does not torture; it reasons
>
> bottom of page 117
> end of note

In these interpolations he was thinking directly onto the paper, and assuming that latent in the written word was the power to make his persecutors recognize themselves for what they were:

> Read with some care, I beg you, the first 11 lines of page 200, and then you pack of brutes, you indefensible bunch of gossips, look at yourselves in a mirror and say 'There we are'.
>
> 16 January, evening.

Full of righteous indignation, the notes he wrote for himself are a bridge between his letters to Renée-Pélagie and his more extended pieces of writing. For five years he had funnelled tremendous quantities of energy into letter-writing. The one activity and the one form of self-expression he was allowed, writing also provided him with a means of deepening and disciplining his thinking: he was now finding

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a new balance between self-indulgence and self-control, relaxation and alertness, complaint and creativity, passivity and action. His powerlessness did not preclude the possibility of writing powerful prose. He was aware that Renée-Pélagie's visits gave less impetus to his literary activity than solitude did.

> Let me know, then, whether it is true that you are going so long without seeing me. . . . If it is true and if you will not be coming for a long time yet, I am going to begin a delicious little poem, a little dialogue. I know of nothing more interesting than to sing to you. And Magdalene of Montreuil—the more I am plagued, the more I need my brain to be distracted, and it plagues me to be prevented from seeing you.

The ambivalence is scarcely concealed: would he not prefer singing about her to seeing her?

For five years he had suffered from having nothing to distract him from himself. Confinement in a small space forcibly concentrated his attention on his body, its needs, its smells, its noticeable deterioration. He could also distract his attention from it by using his brain, but he was aware that reasoning had led him into unreason. Without abandoning his attempts to reason with his persecutors, he had lost faith in the power of rational discourse. What he would develop in his fiction was the logic of unreason. If his enemies used moralizing argument as a weapon, there must be a way of either turning it against them or discrediting it. Like a wrestler, he must take advantage of the muscular pressure being exerted against him.

Again and again in his novels, innocent victims suffer at the hands of omnipotent libertines. While the image picked up from the sadistic experiences he had once enjoyed, it gave him enjoyment in the present by inverting the situation of the impotent libertine dominated by the ruthless mother-in-law. After inflicting imaginary tortures on her in letters to Renée-Pélagie and in notes on scraps of paper, he arrived at moments of greater relaxation when he could enjoy empathizing ironically with Mme de Montreuil in plotting against him. This is a literary coefficient of the physical reflex that had made him want to exchange roles with the victims of his flagellation. Here, with macabre relish, he is identifying with the woman who was victimizing him. There is one note on a scrap of paper which starts in the middle of an argument:

> I say unction because how could Madame la Présidente's bidet sponge fail to be very oily? Tell her that I ask her, the next time she

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> sees the *buccaneer* or the *freebooter* Sartinus to be sure and tell him: 'Monseigneur, we thank you for your advice. Nothing does so much good as prison. Our son-in-law proves it. He is unrecognizable since he has been there. Oh, what wise advice you give, Monseigneur. Oh, what a great man you are, Monseigneur.'

Sade now found himself wanting to construct a mirror that would throw back a reproachful image of contemporary absurdities. If his opinions counted for nothing in the world outside the cell, what he needed was an alternative reality, a literary space, where he would be omnipotent. Tired of being the system's victim, he appointed himself its ribald judge.

Apart from his letters, his first important work was an atheistic credo, *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribund,* which he completed on 12 July 1782. Paradox had become Sade's favorite plaything. If there was no circuit of communication by which he could prove his innocence, at least he could have fun by short-circuiting the line of argument.

That he found relief by writing is unremarkable. In his situation, nothing could have been more natural than the urge to pour words over every available scrap of paper. But if what he wrote had not been important, it would not be disturbing 200 years later. He did not choose to turn his attention inwards: he had no option. His achievement is that before the Romantic movement had been launched, he succeeded in making solipsism look like omniscience.

His *Dialogue* is the story of a death-bed conversion, but it is the priest who is converted. When the dying man is asked whether he regrets the sins to which human frailty has led him, he says it was religion that led him into sin, by teaching him to resist the desires that nature had implanted. If only he had had the good sense to acknowledge Nature's omnipotence, he would have yielded to them completely, and had a more enjoyable life.

The priest is unable to explain why God, after creating a corrupted nature, should have wanted to test humanity by giving it freedom of choice. He must have been able to see into the future, and if he wanted us to resist temptation, why did he choose not to make us stronger? As it is, we are all driven by irresistible forces, victims of our own inclinations. Our virtues and our vices are equally necessary to Nature, who skillfully holds the balance between them. The best incentive to virtuous behavior is not intimidation but reason. Ethics depend entirely on the principle of trying to make other people as happy as we wish to be ourselves. The dying man would therefore like to make the

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priest as happy as he intends to be himself in his final minutes. In the neighboring room are the six lovely women he has been saving for this occasion. He offers to share them with the priest, who is promptly converted.

The change of heart is unrealistic, and so is the vigor the dying man displays in arguing and in making love. But the dialogue belongs to the convention by which literature—obliged, in self-defence to prove itself morally useful—had been combining the arts of oratory and fable. Though the development by which Sade was making himself into a professional writer was too gradual for us to give it a date, the letters of 1782–3 are incomparably better written than the earlier ones. He had always been capable of irony, but it had taken him a long time to convert outrage at his immobilization into a powerhouse of righteous indignation. After five years of screaming out about the injustice of his punishment, he was able to take it for granted that justice was unavailable. If the letters to Renée-Pélagie had served no other purpose, they had at least apprenticed him to the craft of arranging words in sentences, and now, if he could keep his mind calm, he could pick up threads from several earlier phases of his life—the study of rhetoric with the Jesuits, the philosophical reading he had done in the early seventies, the sensual and sacrilegious experiences of his libertine adventures. But there is nothing blasphemous in his *Dialogue:* the solitude he would never have experienced—given freedom of choice—had brought him to a cool-headed synthesis he could never otherwise have achieved.

From 1782 onwards, the letters to Renée-Pélagie are illuminated with shafts of literary brilliance that reach a long way beyond the private suffering. It did not matter that she was incapable of appreciating the nuances of his satire or answering on the same intellectual level. Prison had taught him to be self-sufficient. He would have written neither the letters nor the plays without having someone to read them, but his dependence on her reactions was superficial and sometimes sadistic: he took pleasure in knowing she would be totally nonplussed by such Swift-like sallies as the one in his letter of July 1783. Was there any truth, he enquired, in the rumors that after his arrest in the Hôtel de Danemark, Mme de Montreuil wanted an expert to confirm whether M. de Sade had "outraged" his wife's buttocks? He has been told, he says,

> that you then tucked up your petticoat. The magistrate Le Noir, put on his spectacles, Albaret held the candle, the officers of the Inquisition took notes. And an inventory of fixtures was written in these terms: Item . . . we avouch the said Pélagie du Chauffour to be well

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> and duly equipped with two very white buttocks, very beautiful and intact. We approached the said member and had our bailiffs approach as closely as ourselves. At their risk and peril they did half-open, part, sniff and study thoroughly, and having, like ourselves, observed nothing but health in those parts, we have delivered the present act, for use in conformity with the law.

Everything he wrote was subject to inspection, and within a few weeks of his filling the exercise book that contained the *Dialogue* all the books he had been reading were taken away. They overheated his brain, he was told, and induced improprieties. "I am in despair," Renée-Pélagie wrote, "at seeing you reduced to having nothing to do. . . . I beg you to restrain yourself in your writings. You are doing yourself infinite harm. Make reparations by thinking in accordance with the decency which is there at the bottom of your heart."

The confiscation of his books upset the precarious equilibrium he had achieved. In a June letter that ended "I have begun my 210th week of imprisonment," he had come close to apologizing for his suspicions of infidelity: "Six visits from you were enough to awaken me from my nightmare, which was an insult to you. I shall never have it again. I know better how to value what I love." But at the end of July, he had a violent quarrel with his jailer. Whether the man was hit, or only threatened, Sade again forfeited the right to take walks, even in the corridor. In August, with no books and no exercise, he became extremely depressed, and it was at about this time that he began working on *Les 120 journées de Sodome.*

Two years earlier he had ended a letter to his wife with the phrase "My brain will never ripen in the shade." What he now felt, justifiably, was that it had ripened. "In 1777," he wrote on 19 August 1782,

> I was still fairly young. . . . My soul had not yet hardened. It was not yet inaccessible, as you have carefully made it, to kindly sentiments. Different methods could have produced considerable results, but you did not want them and I am grateful. . . . It can be said that you have been given the wrong advice but, in all conscience, I am very glad things turned out the way they have.

What was saving him from despair was the mental habits he had formed. As he said in the same letter to Renée-Pélagie, "Habits are so prodigiously bound up with a man's constitution that ten thousand years of prison and five hundred pounds of chains could do nothing but give them more force. I would greatly surprise you if I told you that the memory of all these things is what I call to my aid when I want to blunt the pain of my situation."

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"I would bet you imagined you were working wonders," he wrote to her in another letter, "in reducing me to an atrocious abstinence from the sins of the flesh. Well, you were quite mistaken. You were heating up my brain. You made me create phantoms which I must bring to life." Genet's dependence on masturbation fantasies is remarkably similar: "I exist only through those who do not exist except for the being they receive from me."

His novels are not generically different from his *Dialogue*. The ratio of action to argument may be higher, but argument bulks large in all his fiction, and it is obvious that the excitement of writing it was not merely intellectual. Just as a sense of wrongdoing had been integral to his sexual pleasure—he preferred the anal position for moral as much as sensual reasons—the pleasure he took in immoralism was almost physical. The *Dialogue* contains the seeds of all his subsequent fiction. The crucial experience, I suspect, was the discovery of how much pleasure was to be had from writing out his fantasy about an orgy involving a priest, a dying man and six beautiful women. Erotic daydream draws freely, if tenuously, on memories of physical contact; the act of writing, the appearance of words on paper, not only stabilizes the imaginary action but helps to elaborate it. In becoming less cerebral, the experience becomes more orderly. Even if the words will never be read, they are hostages to space outside the mind. They have a tangible, if two-dimensional, existence, and they systematize the action, discipline it, commit it tidily to a sequence or a scheme. A description of a woman's body, for instance, may be based on a merging of memory with desire, anthologizing any number of appetizing features, but it must be self-consistent. In fantasy she can be a redhead one minute and blonde the next; in eighteenth-century prose she cannot:

> The elegance of her figure did not detract from her freshness. It did not stop her from being plump and rounded. The most delicious curves, offering themselves under a skin whiter than lilies, gave the impression that love itself had carefully formed her. Her face was slightly long, the features extraordinarily noble, with more majesty than prettiness, more grandeur than delicacy. Her eyes were big, black and full of fire; her mouth extremely small and decorated with the most beautiful teeth that could be imagined. Her tongue was thin and narrow, of a beautiful rosy pinkness and her breath was even sweeter than the smell of a rose. Her throat was full, very round, as white and firm as alabaster. The most extraordinary curves led down deliciously from the small of her back to the most precisely and artistically sculpted bottom that nature had produced for a very long time. Its roundness was exact. It was not very big but firm, white,

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> curved and half opening only to offer the most seemly, most enchanting and most delicate little hole. This bottom, charming refuge of lubricity's sweetest pleasures, was delicately colored with a hint of pink. But, good God! These attractions did not last long. Four or five assaults from the Duke soon withered all their gracefulness.

But what is the real function of the last three sentences? Ostensibly an account of damage inflicted by a large male organ, they have a secret connection with the way that masturbation fantasy dissolves into vagueness as the sensation recedes. As Sartre says in *Saint Genet*, the characters melt, the onanistic activity produces only a caricature of love. The masturbator evokes the notion of a couple without ever believing himself to be part of one. The other person is not there. But the pleasure is real, and, as it fades, the feeling of guilt needs to be counterweighted by a defiant satisfaction. "The failure of the pleasure is an acid pleasure in failure."

Masturbation is a strategy for coping with a situation in which contact is being made with no other bodies; literature resembles it in so far as the act of writing yields a pleasure in which no one else can participate, however much pleasure the results yield later. Writers vary in the extent to which they think of impact on the reader. *Les 120 journées de Sodome* is like Genet's *Nôtre Dame des Fleurs* in setting up a dangerously intimate relationship in spite of—or because of—the improbability that either book would ever reach any readers. *Nôtre Dame des Fleurs* was written in pencil on brown paper that should have been used for making bags; one incomplete draft was found by a warder and burnt. Sade wrote in constant fear that his manuscript would be confiscated and destroyed.

Sartre has said that Genet's book seems to be about fatality.

> The characters are fate's puppets; but it quickly becomes clear that this pitiless Providence is the obverse side of a supreme, divine freedom—the author's. No book is more pessimistic: with maniac scrupulousness, it leads human creatures downhill towards death. Yet, in its strange language, it presents their downfall as a triumph: all the miserable creatures he describes emerge as heroes, the elect.

The same could be said of *120 journées*. The structure of the book leads the four libertines, their acolytes and their victims ineluctably downhill from the simple passions of Part One through the "double" and "criminal" passions of the second and third parts to the "murderous" passions of the fourth. Had Sade completed the book, only sixteen

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of his forty-six characters would have survived. Thirty of them would have been wiped out in a tidal wave of aggression that would not have seemed to have its source either in fate or in the dominant characters. Like Genet's *personae*, they are not fortified with the semblance of autonomy. Genet told Sartre: "My books are not novels because none of my characters makes his own decisions." "That," says Sartre, "explains the desolation of the book. It is like a desert. Hope could have been prompted only by active, free characters. Genet is concerned only to indulge his cruelty . . . a savage God who gets drunk on human blood."

The relationship of writers to their characters is like that of parents to a child: they cannot give what they themselves lack, and if the emotional lack is chronic, they will try to take. Sade and Genet both achieved freedom by squeezing it out of their characters. If Apollinaire was right to describe Sade, who spent more than half his adult life in prison, as "the most free spirit that ever lived," this is how he achieved freedom.

But is this freedom real or imaginary, sane or schizoid? It is worth comparing both the real isolation of Sade and the isolation he imagined for his libertine heroes with schizoid isolation as R.D. Laing describes it. The individual

> in one sense is trying to be omnipotent by enclosing within his own being, without recourse to a creative relationship with others, modes of relationship that require the effective presence to him of other people and of the outer world. He would appear to be, in an unreal, impossible way, all persons and things to himself. The imagined advantages are safety for the true self, isolation and hence freedom from others, self-sufficiency, and control.

When Sade, before his imprisonment, had had opportunities for making creative relationships with other people, he had been unable to take advantage of them. There had been no rapport in any of his relationships. Freed forcibly from the compulsion to take sadistic pleasure from other people's bodies, he had to be self-sufficient—to find a way of being all persons and all things to himself. The only real, possible way was to create an unreal or fictional world.

In the notes he prepared for Parts Two to Four of *120 journées de Sodome*, it is not only the days that are numbered, but the atrocities: the 102nd in Part Four involves dragging the victim over red-hot spikes and throwing her into a brazier. A reader ignorant of what Sade was suffering might find his malice incomprehensible; his need to torture his characters was like Genet's when he wrote, "It is time for this pimp, cocky and so beautiful, to experience the torments reserved for the

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feeble." Later on, during the revolution, Sade would have a real opportunity to revenge himself on Mme de Montreuil. But having vented his hatred in fiction, he would have the strength to spare her life. At the moment of venting it, he was feeble.

120 journées is a diabolically ingenious machine which simultaneously inverts the reality of Sade's situation and subverts the morality that justified it. He described his four debauched heroes as "champions"; they were for him what Beckett calls "vice-existers." They even gave him a flattering mirror-image of his own isolation. To enjoy flagellation, perversion and sexual excess, they imprison their victims in a Gothic castle which is remote and inaccessible enough to guarantee freedom from society's interference. What Sade accepted involuntarily they chose.

Realistic criteria are almost as irrelevant as they were to the *Dialogue.* Having total power over their victims, the libertines would not need to explain anything, but the narrative is replete with explanations. Subtitled *L'Ecole de libertinage,* the novel reverses the tradition of the moral fable, while illustrating Sade's dictum that to be erotic it is essential to articulate crime in language. It is not merely that words were his only means of representing actions: what was revolutionary about the book was its uninhibited exploration of the space between sensation and formulation. Unlike animals, we cannot enjoy a sensation without describing it to ourselves. Awareness of pleasure or pain is always impure, contaminated by words, even when they remain unspoken. At the same time, verbalization extends the pleasure or the pain. Once words have been let in, the imagination cannot be kept out. The idea of using narrative to spice and protract sensual pleasure is at least as old as the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*; but Sade was sensualizing language in a different kind of assault on the "*ami lecteur,*" who is addressed in the second person singular with the insolent promise of

> the impurest story ever told since the beginning of the world. . . . No doubt you will dislike a great deal in all the misdeeds described—one is aware of that—but some of them will warm you up so much it will cost you sperm, and that is all we have to do; without telling you everything, analyzing everything, how could we have found out what appeals to you?

A play-within-a-play tends to focus attention on the relationship between action and audience by offering an onstage simulacrum of it; stories-within-a-story can question the relationship between fiction

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and reader in a similarly provocative way. Sade's four libertines have recruited four experienced ex-prostitutes to reminisce about unsavory episodes. The function of these stories is to revive the libertines' appetite for new orgies.

Without any grounds for expecting the book to be published, Sade was visualizing a male reader, and writing with one eye on his erectile tissue. We are obviously intended to follow the example of the libertines, who continually interrupt the story-telling in order to act out something that has been directly or indirectly suggested. Even if we do not follow suit, the deft alternation between the two levels of narrative not only reminds us of the medium but forces us to reexamine the connection between word and sensation, image and action.

One of the stock arguments against describing the sexual act is that it is always the same. Sade's structure is based on the conviction that it is not: an enormously extended set of variations moves progressively away from the original theme. This was not merely a strategem for avoiding repetition: it was a logical development from the assumption that to the connoisseur of sexual pleasure, diversification is essential. For the libertine who has the means of gratifying every desire, the problem is how to save the appetite from becoming jaded. Sade's narrative method was wedded to his immoralism. Analysis and classification lead naturally to diversification, which will inevitably carry us further and further from the norms. One of his deadliest insights is expressed in one of his pithiest epigrams: "The true way of enlarging and multiplying one's desires is to wish to impose limits on them." This also explains the principle by which the book was written. He imposed a rigidly schematic structure on the action, planning an organized progression through the 120 days and arranging his characters mathematically in groups: the four libertines, their four women, eight young men, each with an outsize penis, eight boys, eight girls, four story-tellers, four old women chosen for their vileness, and six cooks.

He also did well to make the libertines formulate strict rules for themselves and their victims. The subject matter is potentially anarchic. The sexual excesses and the coprophilia break down all the barriers erected by hygiene and by civilization. Some of the libertines' rules go directly against the old rules. Religious piety is severely punished. The boys and girls have to leave their bodies unwashed and their bottoms unwiped for stipulated periods. Farting, defecation and perverted sexual intercourse are made into spectator sports. Semen, urine and excrement are consumed in prodigious quantities. But there are strict rules governing property, privacy and the preservation of

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virginity—rules which are made by the novelist only to be broken by the characters. They are like a grid made of ropes. The subject-matter can burst its bonds, while the anarchy can be measured against a scale.

But if Sade had finished the novel, he might have found himself needing to modify his style, as if he were progressively introducing discord into a classical symphony. The 120 days are spread over four winter months, November to February, and each of the story-tellers is on duty for a month. We know that the criminality will increase steadily, both in the main narrative and in the story-tellers' stories, so the mounting disorderliness of the behavior creates a disturbing, almost disrupting, pressure within the geometrically orderly framework.

The Duc de Blangis regards man as a machine in the hands of nature, and he boasts that he has been faithful to the principles he formed in his youth. "They taught me that virtue was empty, a nothing . . . only vice was made so that man could experience that moral and physical vibration, source of the most exquisite pleasures. . . . So I have nothing to hold me back except the laws. . . . My money and my credit put me above the vulgar plagues which should attack only the people."

Properly regarded, the laws are valuable because they stand between desire and its attainment, and there is no satisfaction to be had if desires are attained too easily. As Sade makes Durcet, the financier, put it, "Happiness consists not in consummation but in desire, in shattering the restrictions imposed as obstacles to it." Living at the opposite pole of deprivation from his characters—having unlimited opportunities for desire and none for consummation—Sade led them to conclusions from which he could take comfort. They find it very frustrating to have pleasure so readily available. "I swear," says Durcet on the eighth day, "that ever since I have been here, my sperm has not flowed for what is here. It is things which are not here that make me come." The principle of negation had never been stated more simply or more powerfully. Here is a rationale for rejecting reality in favor of the imaginary alternative, denying what is present for the sake of what is not. Sade is squashing his characters into incapacity for enjoyment of immediate action. Implicitly, sexual activity is being negated, and fantasy invested with the energy taken from it, as if thought and language were the only valid components in the experience of sex.

At the same time, what Sade was writing was relevant to his own situation: he was making his sperm flow for things which were not there. If his jailers had been genuinely campaigning for his moral restitution, they might have done better to apply his own logic of inversion. Referring to himself by the number of his cell, he suggested

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in a letter of July 1783 that

> Monsieur No. 6 should have been shut up not with cannibals but with girls. . . . I would have provided him with so many of them that the devil take me if during the seven years he has been there he would not have used up all the oil in his lamp. . . . No more of these *philosophical subterfuges,* of these researches disowned by nature (as if nature concerned herself with all that) of these *dangerous* deviations of an imagination which is too ardent, always chasing after happiness, without ever finding it, ending up by replacing reality with fantasies, honest orgasms with *dishonest deviations.* . . . Put in the middle of a seraglio, Monsieur No. 6 would have become the *friend of women.* He would have acknowledged and *felt* that nothing is *greater* or more beautiful than sex, and that there is no other salvation. Occupied exclusively with serving the ladies and satisfying their delicate desires, Monsieur No. 6 would have sacrificed all his own.

Like the idea of a priest sharing six beautiful women with a dying man, this is one of the fantasies that afforded Sade all the more pleasure for being committed to paper.

For the sadist, one of the greatest disadvantages of solitude is that he cannot feel superior to anyone else. Sade put his dissatisfaction into the mouth of Durcet:

> What we are lacking is comparison. . . . I need the satisfaction of seeing someone who is suffering from not having what I have. . . . Happiness will never exist without inequality. It is like the man who does not understand the value of health until he is ill. The greatest sensual pleasure in the world is watching the tears of those overwhelmed with misery.

Though he was still in the process of schooling himself in detachment, Sade's moods were liable to vary as much as the handwriting in his letters. In the letters written at this time the volatility is phenomenal. Occasionally, full of exuberance, he would express himself straightforwardly. In the morning of 3 July 1783, he wrote to Renée-Pélagie: "I embrace you with all my heart, my dear friend, and write to you quite simply from gaiety of spirit and to tell you that I am feeling well and to ask you to come soon to see me because it is tiresome to go so long without embracing you."

Sometimes the mood changes within the space of a few lines, and such was his power or irony that he could sustain two dissonant moods throughout several pages of prose. In the letter of 23–24 November 1783, there is a pungent mixture of teasing tenderness and scathing

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contempt. The letter is seasoned with endearments all underlined—some bland, some peppery: *my angel, my lolly, my little bow-wow, dear turtledove, my little mother, heavenly cat, violet from the Garden of Eden,* and *fresh pork of my thoughts.* He explained that he was fond of pork and ate very little of it in prison.

He promises to gratify her request for his dirty linen and repeats his own request for clean linen. He peremptorily reiterates his demand for a box of a certain size to contain the drawings she has been sending him. He jokes about the one of a beautiful boy, which prompts him to write out an anecdote about a Cardinal who customarily receives a fresh virgin in his chamber each morning before starting on the day's work. One day the matron who supplies them sends up a beautiful boy in girl's clothes. The gentleman of the chamber is outraged, but, after putting on his spectacles, the Cardinal smiles beneficently: "Peace, peace, my friend. We shall deceive her in her turn. She will think that I have been deceived."

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Daniel Bell

MODERNISM AND CAPITALISM

I

That fabulous polymath Samuel Johnson maintained that no man in his right mind ever read a book through from beginning to end. His own method was to glance rapidly through the pages, read only the parts that interested him, and skip all the rest. This is one way of knowing a book, and for a clever reader it may suffice. But these days, many persons do not read a book but read of it, and usually from reviewers. Given the constraints of the media and the nature of the culture, this knowledge at one remove contains a peril. For one thing, even when a book has a complex argument, most reviewers, busy people they, sprint through a book seeking to catch a few lines to encapsulate the argument and to find a tag which can locate the author into the comfortable niches of the marketable vocabularies of conversation. Since the dominant bias in American culture is a liberal one, an argument that cuts across that liberalism makes some reviewers uncomfortable. And those whose work decries those aspects of contemporary culture which make cheap claims to "liberation," often find themselves labeled as "neo-conservative."

In its own terms, such a designation is meaningless, for it assumes that social views can be aligned along a single dimension. (What is ironic, in fact, is that those who decry the "one-dimensional" society, often hold such a one-dimensional view of politics.) In the larger historical context, the phrase makes no sense because the kind of cultural criticism I make—and I think of similar criticisms by Peter Berger and Philip Rieff—transcends the received categories of liberalism, and seeks to treat the dilemmas of contemporary society within a very different framework.

Since an author's point of view is relevant to the understanding of his intentions, I think it not amiss to say that I am a socialist in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture. Many people might find this statement puzzling, assuming that if a person is

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a radical in one realm, he is a radical in all others; and, conversely, if he is a conservative in one realm, then he must be conservative in the others as well. Such an assumption misreads, both sociologically and morally, the nature of these different realms. I will begin with the values I hold, and deal with the sociological distinctions in the following section.

About economics: The economic realm today is usually thought to be simply instrumental. One of my arguments is that capitalist society, in its emphasis on accumulation, has made that activity an end in itself. But no moral philosopher, from Aristotle and Aquinas, to John Locke and Adam Smith, divorced economics from a set of moral ends or held the production of wealth to be an end in itself; rather it was seen as a means to the realization of virtue, a means of leading a civilized life.

The turning point in modern thought comes with Bentham. Bentham assumed that all men desired happiness, which he described simply as the maximizing of pleasure and the minimizing of pain. In practice this meant that whatever individuals defined as their own good was to be accepted as an "end" to be pursued. Adam Smith had written, besides *The Wealth of Nations*, a book entitled *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which an "impartial spectator" represented the judgment of the community, which all right-thinking men would have to take into account. But for Bentham, in the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, "the Community is a fictitious body" and the interest of the community is "the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it."

Modern capitalist thought has accepted that argument to its own detriment, for a justification only or largely on the basis of individual interest is a weak moral argument. As my colleague Irving Kristol points out, economics is necessarily bound with normative considerations—the judgments whether the consequences of aggregated individual decisions are just and fair. No society can escape the necessity of making a reasoned judgment about what is proper and desirable, and of assessing the consequences of economic decisions in the light of those standards.

Modern economics has become a positive science in which the ends to be pursued are assumed to be individual and varied, and economics is only a science of "means," or of rational choice in the allocation of resources among competing individual ends. The price system, however, is only a *mechanism* for the relative allocation of goods and services within the framework of the kinds of demands

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generated. Yet these demands derive from the existing distribution of income. And, what ultimately provides direction for the economy is the value system of the culture in which the economy is embedded. Economic policy can be efficacious as a means; but it can only be as *just* as the cultural value system that shapes it.

It is for that reason that I am a socialist in economics. For me, socialism is not statism, or the collective ownership of the means of production. It is (as Aneurin Bevan once said), a judgment on the priorities of economic policy. It is for that reason that I believe that *in this realm*, the community takes precedence over the individual in the values that legitimate economic policy. The first lien on the resources of a society therefore should be to establish that "social minimum" which would allow individuals to lead a life of self-respect, to be members of the community. This means a set of priorities that ensures work for those who seek it, a degree of adequate security against the hazards of the market, and adequate access to medical care and protection against the ravages of disease and illness.

I accept and reinterpret, the classical distinction between needs and wants. Needs are what all individuals have as members of the "species." Wants are the varied desires of individuals in accordance with their own tastes and idiosyncrasies. I believe that the first obligation of a society is to meet those essential needs; otherwise, individuals cannot be full "citizens" of the society. Admittedly, the word "needs" is ambiguous. Keynes once wrote: ". . . it is true that the needs of human beings may seem to be insatiable. But they fall into two classes—those needs which are absolute in the sense that we feel them whatever the situation of our fellow human beings may be, and those which are relative in the sense that we feel them only if their satisfaction lifts us above, makes us feel superior to, our fellows. Needs of the second class, those which satisfy the desire for superiority, may indeed be insatiable . . . but this is not true of absolute needs.

Unwittingly, modern economics has established its own distinction between needs and wants: the concept of discretionary income. One part of a person's expenditure is relatively fixed—the amount necessary to meet one's self-defined basic (or, in Keynes's sense, absolute) needs. The other portion is variable: it can be postponed, used to satisfy different wants, and is spent quite often in those pursuits that express the signs of status and the desires for superiority.

The social minimum I support is the amount of family income required to meet basic needs. And, since this is also a cultural definition, it will, understandably, change over time. And I am a socialist, also, in that I do not believe wealth should be convertible into undue

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privilege in realms where it is not relevant. Thus it is unjust, I argue, for wealth to command undue advantage in medical facilities, when these are social rights that should be available to all. In the realms of wealth, status and power, there are principles of just allocation that are distinctive to each realm.

Yet I am a liberal in politics—defining both terms in the Kantian sense. I am a liberal in that, within the polity, I believe the individual should be the primary actor, not the group (be it family or corporation or church, or ethnic or minority group). And the polity, I believe, has to maintain the distinction between the public and the private, so that not all behavior is politicized, as in communist states, or left without restraint, as in the justification of laissez-faire in traditional capitalist societies.

The public realm operates under the rule of law which applies equally to all, and is therefore procedural: it does not specify outcomes between individuals; it treats people equally rather than seeking to "make them" equal. The private realm—in morals and economics—is one where consenting parties make their own decisions, so long as the spillover effects (pornography in one instance, pollution in the other) do not upset the public realm.

I believe in the principle of individual achievement, rather than the inherited, or prescribed allocation of social positions. But I am not an egalitarian in the current, fashionable sense that the law should *make* persons equal—a situation which is not, in fact, equality but representation by numerical quota. One of the reasons that I distinguish between needs and wants is that I do not see how, in the economic realm, one can make incomes equal. The insistence on wage differentials—which is strongest among workers—reflects the moral intuition that differences in skill and effort should be rewarded differently. Once a social minimum is created, then what people do with the remainder of their money (subject to the principle of illegitimate convertibility), is their own business, just as what people do in the realm of morals is equally their own business, so long as it is done privately. And, if universalism prevails in social competition, then the criterion of merit, I believe, is a just principle to reward individual achievement in the society.

I am a conservative in culture because I respect tradition; I believe in reasoned judgments of good and bad about the qualities of a work of art; and I regard as necessary the principle of authority in the judging of the value of experience and art and education. I use the term culture to mean less than the anthropological catchall which defines any "patterned way of life" as a culture, and more than the aristocratic

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tradition which restricts culture to refinement and to the high arts. Culture, for me, is the effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existential predicaments that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives. For this reason, tradition becomes essential to the vitality of a culture, for it provides the continuity of memory that teaches how one's forebears met the same existential predicaments. (Which is why the psalmist says: "If I forget thee, o Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning.")

The emphasis on judgment is necessary to fend off that lack of discrimination which regards all "meaningful" experience as good, and which insists that each group's "culture" is as valid as any other. The debasement of modernity is the emphasis on "*self*-expression," and the erasure of the distinction between art and life, so that the acting out of impulse, rather than the reflective discipline of the imagination becomes the touchstone of satisfaction. To have significance, a culture must transcend the present, because it is the recurrent confrontation with those root questions whose answers, through a set of symbols, provide a viable coherence to the meaning of existence. And since the appreciation of tradition in culture, and judgment in art (and a coherent curriculum in education) has to be learned, authority—in the form of scholarship, teaching, and skilled exegesis—is a necessary guide for the perplexed. And such authority can be earned only by study, not by speaking in tongues.

The triune positions I hold do have a consistency in that they unite a belief in the inclusion of all people into citizenship through that economic minimum which allows for self-respect, the principles of individual achievement of social position on the basis of merit, and the continuity of the past and present, in order to shape the future, as the necessary conditions of a civilized order.

II

In the broader sense, my theme is not just the cultural contradictions of capitalism as such, but of bourgeois society: that new world created by the mercantile and fabricating guilds, the middle or bourgeois class that revolutionized modern society after the sixteenth century by making economic activity, rather than military or religious concerns, the central feature of society. Capitalism is a socioeconomic system geared to the production of commodities by a rational calculus of cost and price, and to the consistent accumulation of capital for the

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purposes of reinvestment. But this singular new mode of operation was fused with a distinctive culture and character structure. In culture, this was the idea of self-realization, the release of the individual from traditional restraints and ascriptive ties (family and birth) so that he could "make" of himself what he willed. In character structure, this was the norm of self-control and delayed gratification, of purposeful behavior in the pursuit of well-defined goals. It is the interrelationship of this economic system, culture, and character structure which comprised bourgeois civilization. It is the unravelling of this unity and its consequence, which are the threads of my argument.

I read the contradictions through two prisms: the first, a synthetic construct, is an "ideal type." It is "ahistorical" and treats the phenomena as a closed system. Thus it can be "hypothetical deductive" and specify the limits of the phenomena. Its virtue as an ideal type is the possibility of identifying the essential lineaments—what I call the axial principles and axial structures—of the circumscribed social realms which the flux of historical change sometimes obscures. Being static, however, the ideal type does not account for origins or future directions. For that, one needs the second prism of history and the detailed empirical complexity which is its content.

Using the ideal type, I see the contradictions of capitalism in the antagonistic principles that underlie the technical-economic, political and cultural structures of the society. The technical-economic realm, which became central in the beginning of capitalism, is, like all industrial society today, based on the axial principle of economizing: the effort to achieve efficiency through the breakdown of all activities into the smallest components of unit cost, as defined by the systems of financial accounting. The axial structure, based on specialization and hierarchy, is one of bureaucratic coordination. Necessarily, individuals are treated not as persons but as "things" (in the sociological jargon their behavior regulated by the role requirements), as instruments to maximize profit. In short, individuals are dissolved into their function.

The political realm, which regulates conflict, is governed by the axial principle of equality: equality before the law, equal civil rights, and, most recently, the claims of equal social and economic rights. Because these claims become translated into entitlements, the political order increasingly intervenes in the economic and social realms (in the affairs of corporations, universities, and hospitals), in order to redress the positions and rewards generated in the society by the economic system. The axial structure of the polity is representation, and, more recently, participation. And the demands for participation, as a principle, now are carried over into all other realms of the society. The

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tensions between bureaucracy and equality frame the social conflicts of the day.

Finally, the cultural realm is one of self-expression and self-gratification. It is antiinstitutional and antinomian in that the individual is taken to be the measure of satisfaction, and *his* feelings, sentiments and judgments, not some objective standard of quality and value, determine the worth of cultural objects. At its most blatant, this sentiment asks of a poem, a play, or a painting, not whether it is good or meretricious, but "What does it do for *me*?" In this democratization of culture, every individual, understandably, seeks to realize his full "potential," and so the individual "self" comes increasingly into conflict with the role requirements of the technical-economic order.

A number of critics have objected to these formulations on the ground that "power" still lies primarily in the economic realm, principally in the hands of the large corporations, and that the impulses to self-expression in the culture have been "co-opted" by the capitalist system and converted into commodities, i.e., objects for sale.

Such questions are empirical ones that test particular assumptions, not whether this mode of analysis, i.e., the idea of the disjunction between the realms, is useful or not. The answers lie in the court of history, and I shall return to them at the close of my historical exposition, the second thread of my analysis.

III

Much of the prevailing view of capitalism (that of the last thirty years) was shaped by Max Weber through his emphasis on Calvinism and the Protestant ethic—the role of methodical work and the legitimation of the pursuit of wealth—as the doctrines that facilitated the rise of the distinctive Western organization of rational production and exchange. But the origins of capitalism were twofold. If one source was the *asceticism* which Weber emphasized, the other was *acquisitiveness*, a central theme of Werner Sombart whose work was almost completely neglected in that period of time.

Sombart located the main areas of capitalist undertaking not in the Protestant countries, such as Holland, England or the United States, but in the Florentine world, and he argued that the same kind of prudential bourgeois maxims associated with Benjamin Franklin (who in personal life was a *bon viveur*) could be found several hundred years earlier in the writings of Leon Batista Alberti, whose book *Del governo della famiglia* was a classic in its time, and whose views of middle-class

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virtues, the proper coordination of actions and the profitable employment of time, were adopted by large numbers of bourgeois entrepreneurs and *commerçants* in Italy and France.

Whatever the exact locations of early capitalism, it is clear that, from the start, the two impulses of asceticism and acquisitiveness were yoked together. One was the bourgeois prudential spirit of calculation; the other, the restless Faustian drive which, as expressed in the modern economy and technology, took as its motto "the endless frontier," and, as its goal, the complete transformation of nature. The intertwining of the two impulses shaped the modern conception of rationality. The tension between the two imposed a moral restraint on the sumptuary display that had characterized earlier periods of conquest. What is also evident is that the ascetic element, and with it one kind of moral legitimation of capitalist behavior, has virtually disappeared.

On the level of philosophical justification, the major attack on asceticism was mounted by Jeremy Bentham, who argued that asceticism ("miseries" inflicted by sectarians on unwilling others) violated the "natural" hedonism which rules men—the search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Its "mischief" is that, whatever its pure intention, asceticism leads to "despotism" over men. The principle of utility alone could serve as the regulating instrument of men's search to satisfy their diverse ends. Thus the notion of common ends was dissolved into individual preferences.

On the plane of history, the "economic impulse" had been constrained earlier by the rules of custom and tradition, to some extent by the Catholic moral principle of the just price, and later by the Puritan emphasis on frugality. As the religious impulses diminished, a complex history in its own right, so did the restraints. What became distinctive about capitalism—its very dynamic—was its boundlessness. Propelled by the dynamo of technology, there were to be no asymptotes to its exponential growth. No limits. Nothing was sacred. Change became the norm. By the middle of the nineteenth century, this was the trajectory of the economic impulse. It was, as well, the trajectory of the culture.

IV

The realm of culture is the realm of meanings, the effort in some imaginative form to make sense of the world through the expressiveness of art and ritual, particularly those "incomprehensions" such as tragedy and death that arise out of the existential predicaments which

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every self-conscious human being must confront at some point in his life. In these encounters, one becomes aware of the fundamental questions—what Goethe called *Urphänomen*—which frame all others. Religion, as the oldest effort to comprehend these "mysteries," has historically been the source of cultural symbols.

If science is the search for the unity of nature, religion has been the quest for the unity of culture in the different historical periods of civilizations. To close that circle, religion has woven tradition as the fabric of meaning and guarded the portals of culture by rejecting those works of art which threatened the moral norms of religion.

The modern movement disrupts that unity. It does so in three ways: by insisting on the autonomy of the aesthetic from moral norms; by valuing more highly the new and experimental; and by taking the self (in its quest for originality and uniqueness) as the touchstone of cultural judgment. The most aggressive outrider of the movement is the self-proclaimed *avant-garde* which calls itself Modernism. I see Modernism as the agency for the dissolution of the bourgeois world view and, in the past half-century, as gaining hegemony in the culture.

The difficulties of defining Modernism are notorious. Schematically, I would specify three different dimensions:

1. Thematically Modernism has been a rage against order, and in particular, bourgeois orderliness. The emphasis is on the self, and the unceasing search for experience. If Terence once said, "Nothing human is alien to me," the Modernist could say with equal fervor, "Nothing inhuman is alien to me." Rationalism is seen as devitalizing; the surge to creativity is propelled by an exploration of the demonic. In that exploration, one cannot set aesthetic limits (or even moral norms) to this protean reach of the imagination. The crucial insistence is that experience is to have no boundaries to its cravings, that there be "nothing sacred."

2. Stylistically, there is a common syntax in what I have called "the eclipse of distance." This is the effort to achieve immediacy impact, simultaneity, and sensation by eliminating aesthetic and psychic distance. In diminishing aesthetic distance, one annihilates contemplation and envelops the spectator in the experience. By eliminating psychic distance, one emphasizes (in Freudian terms) the "primary process" of dream and hallucination, of instinct and impulse. In all this modernism rejects the "rational cosmology" that was introduced into the arts during the Renaissance and codified by Alberti: of foreground and background in pictorial space; of beginning middle, and end, or sequence, in time; and the distinction of genres and the modes of work appropriate to each genre. This eclipse of distance,

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as a formal syntax, cuts across all the arts: in literature, the "stream of consciousness"; in painting, the elimination of the "interior distance" within the canvas; in music, the upset of the balance of melody and harmony; in poetry, the disruption of the ordered meter. In the broadest sense, this common syntax repudiates mimesis as a principle of art. (Clearly not all Modernist writers are "anti-bourgeois" in any overt sense. T. S. Eliot was a High-Church Anglican and William Faulkner a traditionalist in his Southern politics. Yet both men were great "experimenters" in poetry and in the novel. Despite their specific political or cultural *beliefs*, one of the effects of their "modernist styles" was to disrupt the "rational cosmology" which underlay the bourgeois world view of an ordered relationship of space and time.)

3. The preoccupation with the medium. In all periods of cultural history, artists have been conscious of the nature and complexity of the medium as a formal problem in transmuting the "pre-figured" into the "figured" result. In the last twenty-five years, we have seen a preoccupation not with the content or form (i.e., style and genre), but with the medium of art itself: with the actual texture of paint and materials in painting, with the abstract "sounds" in music, with phonology or even "breath" in poetry, and with the abstract properties of language in literature—often to the exclusion of anything else. Thus it is the encaustic surface, not the image, that generates excitement in the paintings of Jasper Johns; the aleatory or chance factors in the music of John Cage; the aspirate rather than the syllable, as a measure of line in poetry of Robert Creeley—all of these as expressions of the self, rather than formal explorations of the limits and nature of the medium itself.

Modernism has, beyond dispute, been responsible for one of the great surges of creativity in Western culture. The period from 1850 to 1930 probably saw more varied experiments in literature, poetry, music and painting—if not more great masterpieces—than any previous period we have known. Much of this arose out of the creative tension of culture, with its adversary stance, against the bourgeois social structure. Peter Gay has argued that "the modernist movement was not only an expression of hostility. It was also an act of affirmation . . . modernism was as much an heir as the adversary of liberalism." Certainly this is true, for the essence of liberalism was the emphasis on the self. But Mr. Gay's effort at redress misses the dialectic of tension. What was affirmation for Manet, about whom Mr. Gay is writing, was soured derision later for Apollinaire and Artaud.

There has been a price. One cost has been the loss of coherence in culture, particularly in the spread of an antinomian attitude to moral norms and even to the idea of cultural judgment itself. The greater

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price was exacted when the distinction between art and life became blurred so that what was once permitted in the *imagination* (the novels of murder, lust, perversity) has often passed over into *fantasy*, and is acted out by individuals who want to make their lives a work of art, and when, with the "democratization" of criticism, the touchstone of judgment is no longer some consensual agreement on standards, but each "self's" judgment as to how art enhances that "self."

Changes in culture interact with a social structure in complicated ways. Where there is a patronage system, the patron—be it prince, or church, or state—commissions a work of art, and the cultural needs of the institution, such as the Church, or the tastes of the prince, or the demands for glorification by the State, will shape the regnant style of the time. But where art is bought and sold, the market is where culture and social structure cross. One would expect that where culture has become a commodity the bourgeois taste would prevail. But in extraordinary historical fact, this has not been the case.

The phrase "cultural hegemony"—identified with the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci—signifies the dominance of a single group in shaping the prevailing world view which gives a people an interpretation of the age. There have been many times where a single worldview, growing out of and serving a dominant class, has prevailed. In the twelfth century—the "Age of Faith" symbolized by Innocent III—we see the apotheosis of Church control over society not in the uniformity of devotion, but, as Bryan Wilson has put it, "because the imprint of faith and order demanded by ecclesiastical authority dominated the social framework." The closest analogue today—in the regulation of daily life, the heavy handed control of production and distribution, and the restraint of impulse and the glorification of authority—is the Soviet world, where the Party exercises complete cultural hegemony. It is an ideologically prescribed social order.

Marxists have assumed that under capitalism there has also been a single cultural hegemony—the ideas of the "ruling class." Yet the astonishing fact is that in the past hundred years, if there has been a dominant influence—in the high culture at least—it has been the avowed enemy of that class, Modernism.

At the start the capitalist economic impulse and the cultural drive of modernity shared a common source, the ideas of liberty and liberation, whose embodiments were "rugged individualism" in economic affairs and the "unrestrained self" in culture. Though the two had a common origin in the repudiation of tradition and the authority of the past, an adversary relation between them quickly developed. One can say, as Freud would, that the discipline required by work was threatened by the libidinal energies diverted to culture. This may

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perhaps be true, but it is abstract. What would seem to be the more likely historical explanation is that the bourgeois attitudes of calculation and methodical restraint came into conflict with the impulsive searchings for sensation and excitement that one found in Romanticism, and which passed over into Modernism. The antagonism deepened as the organization of work and production became bureaucratized and individuals were reduced to roles, so that the norms of the workplace were increasingly at variance with the emphasis on self-exploration and self-gratification. The thread connecting Blake to Byron to Baudelaire—who is the avatar of Modernism—may not be literal, but it is a figurative symbolic lineage.

So long as work and wealth had a religious sanction, they possessed a transcendental justification. But when that ethic eroded, there was a loss of legitimation, for the pursuit of wealth alone is not a calling that justifies itself. As Schumpeter once shrewdly remarked: The stock exchange is a poor substitute for the Holy Grail. The central point is that—at first, for the advanced social groups, the intelligentsia and the educated social classes, and later for the middle class itself—*the legitimations of social behavior passed from religion to modernist culture.* And with it here was a shift in emphasis from "character," which is the unity of moral codes and disciplined purpose, to an emphasis on "personality," which is the enhancement of self through the compulsive search for individual differentiation. In brief, not work but the "life style" became the source of satisfaction and criterion for desirable behavior in the society.

Yet paradoxically, the life style that became the imago of the free self was not that of the businessman, expressing himself through his "dynamic drive," but that of the artist defying the conventions of the society. Increasingly, it is the artist who begins to dominate the audience, and to impose his judgment as to what is to be desired and bought. The paradox is completed when the bourgeois ethic, having collapsed in the society, finds few defenders in the culture (do any writers defend *any* institutions?) and Modernism as an attack on orthodoxy, has triumphed and become the regnant orthodoxy of the day.

V

Any tension creates its own dialectic. Since the market is where social structure and culture cross, what has happened is that in the last fifty years, the economy has been geared to producing the life styles paraded by the culture. Thus, not only has there been a contradiction

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between the realms, but that tension has produced a further contradiction *within* the economic realm itself. In the world of capitalist enterprise, the nominal ethos in the spheres of production and organization is still one of work, delayed gratification, career orientation, devotion to the enterprise. Yet, on the marketing side, the sale of goods, packaged in the glossy images of glamour and sex, promotes a hedonistic way of life whose promise is the voluptuous gratification of the lineaments of desire. The consequence of this contradiction is that a corporation finds its people being straight by day and swingers by night.

What has happened in society in the last fifty years—as a result of the erosion of the religious ethic and the increase in discretionary income—*is that the culture has taken the initiative in promoting change*, and the economy has been geared to meeting these new wants. In this respect, there has been a significant reversal in the historical pattern of social change. During the rise of capitalism—in the "modernization" of any traditional society—one could more readily change the economic structure of a society: by forcing people off the land into factories, by imposing a new rhythm and discipline of work, by using brutal means or incentives (e.g., the theory of interest as the reward for "abstinence" from consumption) to raise capital. But the superstructure—the patterns of family life, the attachments to religion and authority, the received ideas that shaped people's perceptions of a social reality—was more stubbornly resistant to change.

Today, by contrast, it is the economic structure that is the more difficult to change. Within the enterprise, the heavy bureaucratic layers reduce flexible adaptation, while union rules inhibit the power of management to control the assignment of jobs. In the society, the economic enterprise is subject to the challenges of various veto groups (e.g., on the location of plants or the use of the environment) and subject more and more to regulation by government.

But in the culture, fantasy reigns almost unconstrained. The media are geared to feeding new images to people, to unsettling traditional conventions, and the highlighting of aberrant and quirky behavior which becomes imagos for others to imitate. The traditional is stodgy, and the "orthodox" institutions such as family and church are on the defensive about their inability to change. Yet if capitalism has been routinized, Modernism has been trivialized. After all, how often can it continue to shock, if there is nothing shocking left? If experiment is the norm, how original can anything new be? And like all bad history, Modernism has repeated its end, once in the popgun outbursts of Futurism and Dadaism, the second time in the phosphorescent

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parodies of Pop paintings and the mindless minimalism of conceptual art. The exclamation points that end each sentence of the Manifestoes, have simply become four dots that trail away in the tedium of endless repetition.

In the revelation of wisdom, the Owl of Minerva flies at dusk because life had become gray on gray. In the victorious apocalypse of Modernism, the dawn is a series of gaudy colors whirling in strobismic light. Today, Modernism has become not the work of serious artists but the property of the *culturati*, the "cultural mass," the distribution sector of cultural production, for whom the shock of the old has become the chic of the new. The *culturati* have carried over, in rhetoric, the adversary stance against bourgeois orderliness and sobriety, yet they impose a conformity of their own on those who deviate from its guarded canons.

In the 1960s, one beheld the "new" phenomenon of the counter-culture. Yet the very name was a conceit. The "adversary culture" was concerned with art, the use of the imagination to transfigure recalcitrant memory or intractible materials into a *work* that could, in its power, transcend its time. It existed in the realm of culture. The so-called counter-culture was a children's crusade that sought to eliminate the line between fantasy and reality and act out in life its impulses under a banner of liberation. It claimed to mock bourgeois prudishness, when it was only flaunting the closet behavior of its liberal parents. It claimed to be new and daring when it was only repeating in more raucous form—its rock noise amplified in the electronic echo-chamber of the mass media—the youthful japes of a Greenwich Village bohemia of a half century before. It was less a counter-culture than a counterfeit culture.

In this double contradiction of capitalism, what has been established in the last thirty years has been the tawdry rule of fad and fashion: of "multiples" for the *culturati*, hedonism for the middle classes, and pornotopia for the masses. And in the very nature of fashion, it has trivialized the culture.

VI

Has Modernism been "co-opted," as Herbert Marcuse suggests? In one dimension, yes. It has been converted into a commodity for promotion and profit. But in the deeper transformations of structure, that process can only undermine the foundations of capitalism itself. The sociological truism is that a societal order is shored up by its

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legitimations, which provide the defenses against its despisers. But the legitimation of the culture, as I have argued, is the quest for self-gratification and the expression of "personality." It attacks established orthodoxy in the name of personal autonomy and heterodoxy. Yet what modern culture has failed to understand is that orthodoxy is not the guardian of an existent order, but is itself a judgment on the adequacy and moral character of beliefs, from the standpoint of "right reason." The paradox is that "heterodoxy" itself has become conformist in liberal circles and exercises that conformity under the banner of an antinomian flag. It is a prescription, in its confusions, for the dissolution of a shared moral order.

Does power still lie in the economic realm, and largely in the hands of the giant corporations? To a considerable extent this is still so in Western society, yet such an argument misreads the nature of societal change today. A capitalist order had historical strength when it fused property with power through a set of ruling families to maintain the continuity of the system. The first deep, internal structural change in capitalism was the divorce of family and property from managerial power and the loss of continuity through the chain of elites. Economic power today lies in institutions whose chiefs cannot pass along their power to their heirs and who, increasingly—since property is not private (but corporate), and technical skill, not property is the basis of managerial positions—no longer have the traditional natural rights, justifications, and legitimacy in the exercise of that power, and feel it keenly. The larger fact is that a modern society multiplies the number of constituencies and given the increasing interdependence of economic and social effects, the political order becomes the place where power is wielded in order to manage the systemic problems arising out of that interdependence and the increasing competition of other, state-directed economies. The major consequence is the expansion of State power, and the fact that the State budget, not the division of profits within the enterprise, becomes the major arbiter of economic decisions (including the formation of capital), and that competition not between capitalist and workers, but between the multiple constituencies (where corporations still exercise a large degree of influence) is the mode of allocating power in the society.

VII

A final word on religion, which for me is the fulcrum of my book. I do not (*pace* Durkheim) see religion as a "functional necessity" for

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society, or that without religion a society will dissolve. I do not believe in religion as a patch for the unravelled seams of society. Nor do societies "dissolve," though in periods of extreme crises (like times of war) the loss of legitimation may sap the will to resist. Religions cannot be manufactured. Worse, if they were, the results would be spurious and soon vanish in the next whirl of fashion.

As Max Weber bitingly observed more than a half century ago:

> The need of literary, academic, or cafe-society intellectuals to include religious feelings in the inventory of their sources of impressions and sensations, and among the topics for discussion, has never yet given rise to a new religion. Nor can a religious renascence be generated by the need of authors to compose books, or by the far more effective need of clever publishers to sell such books. No matter how much the appearance of a widespread religious interest may be stimulated, no religion has ever resulted from the needs of intellectuals or from their chatter. The whirlgig of fashion will presently remove this subject of conversation and journalism, which fashion has made popular.

Religions grow out of the deepest needs of individuals sharing a common awakening, and are not created by "engineers of the soul."

My concern with religion goes back to what I assume is the constitutive character of culture: the wheel of questions that brings one back to the existential predicaments, the awareness in men of their finiteness and the inexorable limits to their power (the transgression of which is *hamartia*), and the consequent effort to find a coherent answer to reconcile them to the human condition. Since that awareness touches the deepest springs of consciousness, I believe that a culture which has become aware of the limits in exploring the mundane will turn, at some point, to the effort to recover the sacred.

We stand, I believe, with a clearing ahead of us. The exhaustion of Modernism, the aridity of Communist life, the tedium of the unrestrained self, and the meaningless of the monolithic political chants, all indicate that a long era is coming to a slow close. The impulse of Modernism was to leap beyond: beyond nature, beyond culture, beyond tragedy—to explore the *apeiron*, the boundless, driven by the self-infinitizing spirit of the radical self. Bourgeois society sundered economics from moral norms to allow the individual to pursue his own self-defined wants, yet at the same time sought to bend the culture to its restricted moral norms. Modernism was the major effort to break away from those restrictions in the name of experience, the aesthetic and the experimental and, in the end, broke all boundaries. Yet if we

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now seek to return economics to moral norms, is there not a similar warranty for culture?

We are groping for a new vocabulary whose keyword seems to be limits: a limit to growth, a limit to the spoliation of the environment, a limit to arms, a limit to the tampering with biological nature. Yet if we seek to establish a set of limits in the economy and technology, will we also set a limit to the exploration of those cultural experiences which go beyond moral norms and embrace the demonic in the delusion that all experience is "creative"? Can we set a limit to *hubris*? The answer to that question could resolve the *cultural* contradiction of capitalism and its deceptive double, *semblable et frère*, the culture of modernity. It would leave only the economic and political mundane to be tamed.

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STORIES

Siv Cedering Fox

THE COMPUTER TERMINAL

I did all my typing and editing through the time-sharing computer terminal installed in my study. It saved me hours of time and freed my mind from worrying about xerox copies and originals, for everything I had written, during the two years I used it, was stored in a greater brain, an enormous computer data center in Manhattan. My friends teased and said, "So, you are having a computer do your writing?"

I teased back and said, "Yes. Of course. This is the twentieth century, isn't it?" Then I casually mentioned that I could write a three-hundred-page novel about Tom, decide at the end of the novel that I can't stand the name Tom, and, with a single command, change all the Toms in the manuscript to Dick or Harry. That impressed them. I then hurried to add that I could move whole paragraphs around without retyping. I could make line 306 follow line 7. Whatever I had entered into the system and corrected was always there, ready to be retrieved, never to be typed or retyped again. I could delete lines or words, change word order and justify margins. It was a glorious system. To my friends I said, "I only wish it would correct my spelling."

February has always been a strange month for me. It is the shortest month. It is my birthday month. I always write a lot in February, and have more strange dreams than usual. This February, I had promised myself to make a real dent in my new novel. On the day before my birthday, I sat down to work on a chapter called "The Green Dress." As usual, I pushed a button, dialed the phone number of the system, waited for the signal, and saw the golf-ball head on my terminal nod. I pushed the return button. It typed:

PLEASE SIGN ON:

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It typed a mixture of characters, three layers thick, and I typed my customer number, my operator's number and my password. It typed:

WELCOME TO WORD/ONE

It typed my name, the time of day, the date, and some numbers noting what space of the computer tape I was using. It asked me my usage distribution code.

Since I do not want my writing available to any other operator, I pushed the return button, leaving the distribution information blank. The computer then reminded me of the width of my margin, the page depth I was using and my tab settings. I was ready to start. But before I could, it typed:

BUT DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

I looked at the line. There had been trouble with the computer a couple of times, and a weird jumble of unreadable letters had been printed out. But I had never seen an understandable sentence that I had not entered printed before. Had I written those words before I signed off the day before? Was it somehow left in temporary storage? I thought about it a minute, without coming up with any logical answer, then I started to type.

THE GREEN DRESS

"Every day," he said, "I have seen you standing above me. In the middle of a speech or a business meeting, there you are, your bare legs on either side of my face. If I am in the middle of a sentence, what can I do but stop? There hasn't been a day when I have not seen you like that. It is like the image of sinking, I told you about, the dream I used to have, a day-dream I still have, at times. The sinking is frightening and enticing. I have to see you like that again, white-skinned, gigantic, above me."

Though I usually type a whole chapter before I ask the terminal to print it back for me, the paragraph did not seem right, so I pushed ¢n. The terminal printed the paragraph, numbering each line. I had typed "Teh" instead of "The" and had skipped

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one of the l's in "still". I corrected the mistakes, and the corrected lines typed themselves back. Then an extra line appeared:

YOUR MOTHER'S DREAM.

I looked over the input page. Had I typed "YOUR MOTHER'S DREAM" anyplace? Not that I could see. Something was not right. I continued:

> As he speaks I see myself through his eyes. The tall V of my legs meeting in purple and soft black above him. I have not thought about the incident, but now I see us as I did then, standing on that bed. Nothing can be taller than a tall woman standing on a bed, looking down. Once I climbed up to the crow's nest of a transatlantic ship, crossing the ocean in mid December; I was fifteen. The waves swelled and the crow's nest seemed to lean way out over the waves, from side to side. The deck of the ship was brightly lit, and it seemed like it was miles away, below me. Bundled up in layers of clothing against the wind and the night, I swayed above the ship, a sweet dizziness inside me. That's how it was that night on the bed. I could feel my long hair touch the bare skin of my buttocks as I swayed, moving my head, seeing, through great distances, a face, and then, falling down to that face.

I felt uneasy about the writing and gave the print command again. The terminal started to type "The Green Dress." An asterisk noted the lines where I had made corrections in the first paragraph. The second paragraph had no mistakes. But after the last word, there was that extra line:

YOUR MOTHER'S DREAM.

I don't know why I did it, but I typed:

What dream?

The terminal typed, and I read:

> Your mother dreamed that your brother was pulled out of the river with a truckload of dead fish.

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I didn't know what was going on. There are still no logical explanations. It was February. I was having trouble with my story. I tried to proceed. I didn't know what to do in the next paragraph. Should the lovers meet after a period of time? Are they lovers or husband and wife? Is the time element important? I decided to solve those problems later, and went on with the part I had meant for the fourth paragraph.

> "It all started with the green dress," he said. "You came down to breakfast that morning, wearing that little green dress, sort of old-fashioned looking, with its puffed sleeves, white trim and white buttons. And one of the buttons unbuttoned. You bent your head to button it, then you looked up, sort of shy, to see if anyone had noticed. You saw me watching you and gave me a funny smile. It was fantastic. Suddenly, at breakfast, those two round shapes were there visible. Did you do it on purpose?" he asked and touched my nose. "On purpose?" he teased.

My hands were shaking. I was having trouble typing. What was the computer picking up? I gave the command to print. It printed the three paragraphs I just entered, and then:

> Remember. Brother. Kicked by a horse. Putting the furniture in the basement on fire. Almost drowned in the river in his light blue suit. Your sister's dream.

I was not dreaming, I was wide awake. I looked around the study and its usual clutter of computer printout, envelopes, manuscripts, packages to be mailed, photographs of friends on the wall, a Coptic weaving, a lithograph showing Edgar Allen Poe, some Chinese calligraphy. I typed:

> What dream?

The terminal head nodded and typed:

> Your sister dreamed she was afraid of her brother. Your brother. She dreamed he was crazy, or drunk. He had a sack with a leg inside it. The sack opened. It was full of fish eyes.

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I hit the key board. The terminal jammed. I pressed the command to clear temporary storage. It typed "cleared." I had erased my writing, but that didn't matter. I typed "*end*." The terminal typed my name and the time of sign off. It said I had been on for 0:32 minutes.

I went out to get the mail, took the dog for a walk, walked around the property to see if the previous night's storm had left any damage. No trees were down. A small branch of white pine lay on the driveway. The walk did not calm me, as I had hoped. I went back into the house. I called my mother, who lives in San Francisco, asked about her health, chatted about the kids. Mother said, "I have to talk to you. I dreamt about your brother . . ." and she proceeded to tell me the dream about the truckload of dead fish.

Mother asked if I had received any letters from Brother, or Father. She asked me what I thought her dream meant. I told her, "Nothing. It is just a dream. You are probably worried about him, that's all." I was really too upset to talk, so I lied and told her someone was at the door. I hung up.

I went back to the study, sat down in the yellow cushioned plexiglass chair, in front of the terminal, and started to dial the data center number 212 265. . . . But I stopped. I went over to the desk. Someone had asked me to send stories for an anthology of works by women writers. I started to look through my manuscripts, but I couldn't concentrate. I called my husband, David.

David is a mathematician and a computer expert. I told him what had happened. He has no patience with stories that even hint at anything supernatural or metaphysical, and I could have predicted his comment:

"Ridiculous."

I told him, "But it happened. It really did. I am upset."

"Listen, you nut," he said. "I've got to go to a meeting now. Let's have supper early. Hey, why don't you give that computer terminal of yours a kiss from me."

I sat down by the terminal again, looked at it, but decided against signing on. I called my sister.

"I am so glad you called," she said, "I have been intending

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to call you. But first I was late with the inventory, then I had to hang the new exhibit, send out invitations and all that. Sometimes I think I am crazy having these champagne openings."

My sister has an art gallery in Colorado.

"I am glad you called," she continued. "I had an awful dream the other night. It was unusually vivid. There was an attic. Some men were working in the attic. It was very cold. I brought them bottles of hot water, so they could warm their hands. The scene changed and there was a party. Brother was there carrying a sack. There seemed to be a human leg inside the sack. Then the sack opened. It was full of fish eyes. Some of them spilled out on the ground."

I asked her if she had talked to Mother. She said: "No."

I told her I better get off the phone and get supper ready. I hung up and went into the kitchen. I like to cook and find it relaxing. I chopped scallions, peeled broccoli, washed and cut some Chinese cabbage, soaked black fungus and dried Chinese mushrooms in hot water, and sliced some beef paper-thin. I boiled water for Japanese noodles, put peanut oil and a clove of garlic in the wok, stirred a couple of drops of sesame oil into the noodles when they were cooked. Kikkoman sauce. Saki. I was involved but not involved enough. I thought about my brother. I was scared of the knife I used. What had my childhood friend written in her Christmas letter? That Brother was going to take revenge on his parents?

It was February, and I had still not thrown away the Christmas mail. I went through it, found the letter, and reread it. A post script said, "Your brother loves and hates his parents. I've heard him say he will revenge his father."

I burned the peanut oil, threw it out and started all over. What was happening?

After supper I showed my husband the printouts. He shrugged his shoulders and suggested we go to a movie. I told him about the phone calls to Mother and Sister.

"You guys and your dreams," he said, shaking his head. "Perhaps someone is fooling with the terminal. Why don't you change your code name."

The next morning, when the kids had left for school, I took

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my coffee up to my study, as usual. I dialed the phone number of the data center and was connected with the computer. The golf-ball head of the terminal nodded and printed:

PLEASE SIGN IN

I signed my customer number, my operator number and my code name "novel." I had used that word to remind myself to keep working at the novel. After the word "novel," I now put a semicolon and a new code word.

The system was friendly as usual. It typed my name, reminded me of tab settings and margins. It asked me for distribution codes. I pushed the return button. The golf-ball was then supposed to nod, instead it printed:

Your dream?

My dream? I had had a dream that night. I dreamt I was looking at a page of a Swedish weekly. It had a picture of my brother. It said, in Swedish, the word for "moose hunting." It said, in Swedish, the word for "crime" and "violence." In the dream I thought, "That is my brother." Then the dream faded. I typed the words:

My dream?

The terminal printed:

> You dreamed you were looking at a Swedish weekly paper. There was a picture of your brother and the words for "moose hunting," "violence" and "crime." You thought, "This is my brother."

I called my husband. His secretary answered.

"Didn't he tell you he was going to Washington?"

I had forgotten that David was going to Washington for the day and that he would probably have to spend the night there, to tend to some additional business the following morning. I said, "Oh, yes. I remember."

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"Anything I can do?" she asked. I thanked her.

"No. No. I just wanted to talk."

I went back to the terminal. I read:

> Remember. Remember the boy who slept in the attic, the boy who slept in the boiler room when your sister visited, the boy who was drunk and said he would kill his father, remember? Your sister held his hand that night in the boiler room. Remember? Remember the other brother, the baby who died at six months, of suffocation? of heart attack? Remember, everyone said he looked just like his father. But the other brother doesn't look like his father, remember? Remember Father tying the boy's hand so he could not suck his thumb? Remember he was told his mouth would look like the asshole of a cow, if he didn't stop sucking his tumb. Remember? Remember the boy who was excluded from his sisters' games, remember? Your father dreams that the boy who slept in the attic in the cold will return in the cold. Your father dreams of moose hunting and a boy's revenge. Your sister dreams of a big party, lots of people, some terrible crime. She dreams of your brother and drowning."

The phone rang. I picked it up and heard static on the line. A foreign voice said, "Overseas operator calling. . . ."

I hung up. I went back to the terminal and stared at the print-out. I read:

> Remember the boy who told his father: "If the ice breaks, I will let you drown in the river."

The phone rang again. "Overseas operator calling. . . ."

Again I hung up. Back to the terminal.

> Your dream. Your mother's dream. Your father's dream. Your sister's dream. Your brother's dream.

My son came in. "I'm hungry. When are we going to eat?"

Supper. I had forgotten about supper. I said "You want to cook?"

"Yeah. T.V. Dinners?"

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"O.K." I said, and my son ran off toward the kitchen, racing his dog.

I told the children I would answer the phone. Whenever it rang, I picked up the receiver, held it for a while, then put it back in its cradle. It was difficult to sleep that night. My dreams were bloody.

The next morning I got up early. I put on red socks, a red cotton turtle neck and black slacks. I put two pendants around my neck: one is a Laplander charm—a troll-drum carved in bone—the other, a tiny beaded bag of red dirt I bought from an old woman in Samburo, Kenya. I took the dog out. Three black crows sat on top of the beech tree. There was a rat on the bird feeder. I saw a blotch of fresh blood on the snow. I went back inside and signed on the computer. I asked it to give me a complete storage report. It printed out the name of each poem, essay, story, and novel chapter I had entered during the last two years. It printed the date each document was entered and its length. I started to delete entry after entry. It was a long process. I typed "*d*" for delete. *d*The Green Dress. The terminal asked:

The Green Dress?

I printed "y" for "yes."
The terminal printed:

DOCUMENT The Green Dress **DELETED**

The door bell just rang. It was a telegram. I brought it up to my study, put it on the table beside the terminal, but I do not open it. I continue the deletion process:

*d*The Dead Fish.

It asks: The Dead Fish? I print "y" for "yes." It prints "DOCUMENT The Dead Fish **DELETED**" An extra line is printed by the terminal. I read:

THIS IS YOUR LAST DOCUMENT

I print "y."

This IS my last document.

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Jules Olitski

FIRST CHAPTER (A SHORT STORY)

This is a book I am writing. This is the first chapter. I will put what I say in italics to distinguish what I have to say from my narrator and what he has to say. Of course everything he has to say, I, myself have put in his mouth. It's just a matter of accepting on your part the suspension of disbelief, which we're all accustomed to doing in the theater, movies, novels, etc. What I mean is that although the narrator is out of me—I've created him—he is not me. The same applies to my characters. So then, the narrator is himself, I am myself, and the characters are themselves. It's important to me that you believe that. Important to me for reasons that will become clear as we go ahead. The reasons aren't necessarily good reasons, decent reasons, anything for me to be proud of, but they are reasons. *My reasons.*

I've got to find a way to talk to myself in order to write this book. Or do I mean find a way to talk to you? Or both? Anyway, it must be over ten years, perhaps fifteen by now, and still the problem of how to begin. And not only how to begin. There are all sorts of problems. The main problem is me. In the book I am writing there is a narrator. The narrator is also writing a book. His book is largely about a character named Yulli. Yulli is a middle-aged painter, but so is my narrator, and so am I. You see how this could get confusing? And there are no end of problems to sort out. The very first sentence of the book—the one the narrator is writing—is a problem. A problem for me, not him. It should be a problem for him as well as me. But somehow it isn't. (So maybe he and I aren't the same after all. If we were the same it would be our problem, not just my problem.) Here's the sentence:

Today I feel like I'm dying.

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(The narrator says that. It's the first sentence of the book.)

Today I feel like I'm dying.

When someone read this book, at that first sentence, he said, "No, you can't begin like that, it sounds . . . ," I think he said Nabokov or perhaps it was Beckett.

So . . . so . . . so what *you might say,* I *might say, that is if I were talking to myself, I might say, so what, so what if Beckett or Nabokov began like that? So it's not original, so how important is it to be original? And even that's not entirely the problem. The problem is also that I don't like Beckett or Nabokov. I used to, I used to like them both. Read almost everything they'd written. Now I don't like them anymore. I don't want to get into literary criticism where I might well be exposed as a stupid ignoramus. Yes, I confess it, I am afraid, deeply afraid of being thought stupid. My stepfather "Kaiser" Hymie always maintained that I am stupid. He maintained it day in and day out. If he were still alive, he would be saying it now. My mother never said anything. She didn't have to. Her look said it. She agreed with the "Kaiser." She's still alive and her look when I see her, which isn't often, still says it.*

God, I've digressed.

To get back to Beckett and Nabokov. Oh, I'm sure that if I put myself to it, I could write something passable, no, even first rate as to why I no longer like Beckett and Nabokov. Does that sound vain? How can I believe it would be that good if underneath everything I'm convinced I'm stupid? It's bad enough to be stupid. To be vain besides—that's fatal. How did I get into all this? Or why? I'll tell you why. In the interest of truth, that's why. I'm telling the truth about myself. I'm exposing myself. Is exposing the same thing as being truthful? This line will get me into philosophy and I'll have to make still another confession of what I am and am not. Stupid, yes, a philosopher I'm not. I'll leave it at that. O.K., so I'm stupid. There it is, in one line, I'm telling the truth about myself, at least as I know the truth, and exposing myself at the same time. What could be better? But there's more to it than that. Why am I telling you that I'm stupid? So that you'll like me! Yes, like me. Telling on oneself is

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frequently, I've noticed, an endearing trait in a person. And disarming, at the very least. So now you know I want to be liked. Is that so terrible? Or unique? As I said, I could get into some explanatory literary criticism as to why I no longer like, or read Beckett or Nabokov, but I don't really want to. That's true. Why should I? (For that matter, there are writers, like Vonnegut and Hesse for example, whom I can stand even less than Nabokov and Beckett.) The only reason I brought them up was because someone had mentioned one of them in connection with the first sentence of my book. Now, if this guy had said, "That sounds like P.G. Wodehouse," that would have been O.K., or Trollope, or Dostoyevsky . . . or Tolstoy, my god! But Beckett, Nabokov. (Wodehouse and perhaps even Trollope might sound provocative in the same sentence with these others but I'm going to let that stand, without explanation or defense, although I assure you I could explain and defend. But I'm not going to. No.)

What's wrong with "Today I feel like I'm dying"? The sentence is perfectly O.K. "Today I feel like I'm dying," and that day when I wrote it the sentence was O.K., and it's still O.K., but because Beckett or Nabokov said it, it, (the sentence) suddenly became literature. No. Literary, not Literature. So I can't use it.

The next sentence was:

> Nothing serious, I mean, just that I didn't get much sleep,

and I went on to say,

> that, plus I have a hangover. I got about two hours sleep. The doorbell jolted me out of an erotic dream.

The doorbell jolted me out of an erotic dream.

Jolted doesn't sound right. Erotic dream doesn't sound right. If I was talking to myself, or to you, would I say, "The doorbell jolted me out of an erotic dream?" What would I say? "The doorbell woke me up. I was having a dirty dream." (Why equate erotic with dirty? I don't, really.) Anyway.

> When I went to the door, no one was there. I couldn't fall back to sleep. I thought, I'll get up and do some work. Might as

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well, since I can't sleep. I splashed some cold water on my face. . . .

Splashed . . . that doesn't sound like something I'd say. Threw some cold water on my face? Washed my face with cold water? I don't know.

I noticed with distaste the dark, puffy pouches under my red eyes. . . .

That stinks."I was disgusted with the way I looked"? That's better.

My head felt stuffed. The cold water didn't help. I thought, I better get back to sleep, or I might have a stroke. What's this about stroke? Well, I'm always thinking I'm about to have a stroke, or have even had one. A slight one, a little one, one I didn't notice. But a stroke! So I went back to bed to try to sleep and ward off the stroke.

O.K., let me at this point say—am I still talking to myself? Or to you? I don't know. But let me at this point say that this chapter, this first chapter, is about how to write a book, this book, my book. Obvious. O.K., to continue, the narrator says:

I tried to pick up the dream at the point I'd been jolted awake. In the dream I'd been in bed with a girl, a beautiful girl. She is lying on her side, her back to me. Suddenly she shifts her back side in a clearly inviting position. She's inviting *me,* and I'm very aroused. But I'm fully clothed for some reason. I begin hastily (I'll have to cut out that word, hastily) to try to remove my pants.

In the manuscript the word is "trousers." "Pants" is better.

I'm clumsy about it, I'm taking forever. Finally I make it. I'm about to penetrate her. . . .

Now, in this first chapter that I'm presently revising, I have this sentence:

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I am about to penetrate her beautiful ass.

Hm. Problem. "I am about to penetrate her beautiful ass" sounds right, but it's too fashionable, too easy, too easy to write that. It's too easy to write and talk about such things today. It raises other problems as well. Look, if I talk about such things, write about such things, one problem is that people will say, uh-huh, Mailer, Philip Roth, who else? Lenny Bruce, and I don't want to be associated with these people particularly, in fact, not at all. Lenny Bruce, my god! I never liked that sour dirty underwear smell of his work. Then too what will people think? What will people think about me? *That I'm a pervert and worse, that I'm a pervert trying to write fashionable prose. I don't know what the answer is to these problems. I'll just have to go on. O.K.*

I'm about to penetrate her beautiful ass. Just then the doorbell. It was 8 am. I'd gone to sleep at 6 am. It's my habit to be awake all night and sleep all day. Or most of the day. I tell my friends that I work at night. Sometimes that's true. For the most part it is true. I do work at night. I don't always work. There are nights that pass without any work at all. Last night was such a night. I watched TV, I ate, I ate too much, I drank. Scotch. Too much, I always drink too much. But I didn't work. As I say, I went to bed at 6 am.

(and here's another sentence that's a problem.)

The last thing I remember was jerking off making believe that I am a priest raping a young girl. It didn't work.

Again the ghost of Lenny Bruce—or is it Roth? Or both? And what will my mother think if she reads this? What will my friends think? And people I don't even know, what are they going to think? Here I am, at my age—I'm suddenly coy about telling you my age. Perhaps I'll tell you later. In any case, it's an advanced age. O.K. I'll tell you. I'm past fifty. I'm not only past fifty, I'm fifty-four. Well . . .

Several questions might be asked. Why a priest? Why a rapist? And why didn't it work? There's a simple explanation for the

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first two questions. I'll deal with the third later. Why not a priest? Why not a rapist? Everything and anything is permissible in masturbation fantasy. That's one of the reasons I suppose why masturbation is so thrilling, so exciting. After all, where else in life can you so easily get away with murder, so to speak?

Very well, a priest-rapist, but not just any ordinary priest-rapist. Father Zossima, in fact, was the model for my priest-rapist fantasy. Yes, Father Zossima, the saintly priest of *The Brothers Karamazov.* But forget about Dostoyevsky's book. In our version Father Zossima has just been turned on (to use a current phrase) by Stavrogin's visit where he confesses to raping a young girl.

Stavrogin? But isn't he in another novel? The Idiot? The Possessed? *If this book, this fiction is going to require a lot of research, I'll drop it, because I happen to be a lazy man, pathologically lazy, I've been told. Of course I'm not really serious about dropping it. Just more self-exposing in the interest of telling on myself—in this case about my laziness. O.K., to go on. Let's drop Stavrogin, as in fact, my narrator did. In masturbation fantasy, as you may have noticed, it's not unusual, so to speak, to switch horses in midstream. Stavrogin was dropped and replaced with Dostoyevsky himself. The narrator also dropped Father Zossima and replaced him with Tikhon Zadonsky, one of Dostoyevsky's models for the character of Father Zossima. So then it's Dostoyevsky who is confessing to Zadonsky that he has raped a young girl, (which indeed he once boasted to Turgenev he had done. Turgenev was shocked and worse. In the end Dostoyevsky said it was all a joke he'd made up to amuse Turgenev, because he loved him. In any case, let me pick up the narrative once again.)*

After his confession to Zadonsky and being let off with two dozen hail Marys and one week of eating only turnips, which Zadonsky loathed and as it happens Dostoyevsky adored.

Russian Orthodox priests don't go in for Hail Marys. I could, I suppose, make Zadonsky a heretic, a secret practiser of Catholic rites. That bit about turnips is a descent into farce. This easy

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falling into farce says something about my character—which I suspect is low. In fact, the whole masturbation thing is farcical. In the narrator's fantasy there are one or two things that occur which he doesn't talk about because he's in a hurry to get on with the sexy part. But I can tell you what they are. No harm done. O.K. Dostoyevsky comes to see Zadonsky, ostensibly to confess raping a young girl, but really he's there to study Zadonsky and talk about religion. He's trying to develop the character he is in the midst of creating—Father Zossima. In fact, my narrator in his fantasy contrives a way for Dostoyevsky to take notes about the cell, the cot, the table, Zadonsky's voice, expressions, age, and state of health. This would have been unnecessary because Dostoyevsky had a photographic memory. My narrator didn't know that and I didn't either until recently when I read Anna Dostoyevsky's memoirs, but that's neither here nor there.

> Dostoyevsky tells Zadonsky the horrifying story of his purchasing a young girl from a maid servant in a bath house and brutally raping the girl. He wants to see the holy man's reaction. The holy man is tired and bored. He wants to get the visit over with quickly and take a nap. He doesn't know Dostoyevsky or his reputation. He doesn't read novels. He once secretly read a French novel in the belief that all French novels are pornographic. The one he happened to read was *Mme. Bovary*. He gave up reading. He was even bored and irritated when he saw the direction Dostoyevsky's confession was taking. Zadonsky had heard this kind of confession a thousand times, but only from serfs and travelling salesmen and drunken peasants. Evidently this sort of thing was happening all over Russia all the time and Zadonsky who enjoyed tales of lechery and salacious sadism as well as the next man was tired of hearing the same old story. But he had never heard it from a master story teller, and he was thrilled and excited, you can bet. But then Dostoyevsky wanted to go on and engage him in a theological discussion about the nature of sin and was redemption a demonstrable fact and if for argument's sake Zadonsky agreed that God didn't exist, would not any act be permissible like raping girls or knocking old ladies heads in with axes and so on. All this kind of talk

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> bored Zadonsky to the point of exasperation. Also, Zadonsky was taking a positive dislike to Dostoyevsky. He thought his eyes were shifty and he didn't approve the way he arched his left eyebrow the way actors are wont to do. He mistrusted actors and thought them vain and stupid.

I must say on the whole I agree. I'm vain and stupid too, but there are different ways of being vain and stupid. Period. There are exceptions, of course. Who? Well, I'm sure there are some. Perhaps James Cagney, but I don't know, he might be vain and stupid like the others. Not that actors have the monopoly on vanity and stupidity—nor does it seem to matter as far as their acting is concerned. There are some great artists too who are vain and stupid. I'm not referring to myself (I mean about being great), but to artists I know. It's hard to explain. How can someone be a great artist and be vain and stupid at the same time? Doesn't making great art have to do somehow with character? I believe it must. But there is the evidence all around, great artists living and dead who were vain and stupid. Some of the living ones I can vouch for, vain and stupid like you wouldn't believe! There is perhaps a simple explanation. It doesn't take place at the same time—the being vain and stupid and *producing great art. When they are vain and stupid, they're not being great artists, they're being vain and stupid. When they're being great artists, naked, so to speak and alone with themselves in their studios they're not being vain and stupid. You can't be vain and stupid at the same time as you're making great art. No way. So when they're making their art they don't allow themselves the need—if there is such a need and I think there is—to feel vain and be stupid. Such character as they have and I insist they must have, gets exercised in the privacy of their studios when they're doing their thing. (I don't like that current coinage.) Anyway, back to my narrator and Zadonsky.*

> He gave Dostoyevsky some penance or other and dismissed him.

A word or two about my narrator before getting back to his masturbation fantasy. First of all, you surely agree, he has pretty

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queer masturbation fantasies if what we are given here is a sample. My narrator is based on someone I know quite well. Like myself, he's an artist and middle aged. He has had a certain success. I needn't go on about him, because he will reveal himself to you. His problem, among others, as you will see, is a fear that you will identify him with the main character of the book who he, the narrator, thinks is crazy. My problem, on the other hand, is that you will identify me with the narrator, who I *happen to think is crazy. So much for that, for the time being. Back to my narrator and his masturbation fantasy:*

> Dostoyevsky leaves Zadonsky's cell. Now, as it happens, Zadonsky has a passion for young girls. In fact, it's why he became a priest in the first place, assuming that as a priest young girls would be available to him to do with pretty much as he liked. He was wrong. In his particular monastery young girls rarely came to confess or ask advice. (Zadonsky had had to settle for young boys—but that's another story and another masturbation fantasy.) As luck would have it, just as Dostoyevsky leaves, and after all these years of waiting, a young girl, ravishingly beautiful, appears at the door of Zadonsky's cell. She is blushing and stammering. Zadonsky, already terribly excited by Dostoyevsky's tale, smooths his cassock to hide his tremendous erection and motions her to come and sit beside him on the cot. Apart from the cot the cell is bare, except for a simple table and desk and inkwell. It is late afternoon and one small window lets in the last light of the fading sun. "Have no fear, my child," Zadonsky says, "we are here in the presence of God who is all merciful and forgiving. What has brought you to me? You can tell me everything."
>
> Zadonsky runs his trembling fingers along her thigh. He reckons that she can't be more than eleven years old. He will have her even if he has to strap her to the bed. After all, he's been waiting a very long time. He has no fear that the child might talk and cause a scandal. Who would believe an eleven-year-old rather than the saintly Zadonsky? Even if she were to be believed, he's so aroused he doesn't care. Any risk would be worth it, to assuage his desire. What's the worst thing that could happen, he asks himself? Be defrocked? So, is that so terrible? He remembers there is a ball of twine in the drawer of

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his desk. The child is too agitated to speak. Her face is scarlet with shame (or at least that's what he thinks).

"Have courage, my dear," he says, slipping an arm around her shoulder, the tips of his fingers lightly carressing an as yet unfulfilled breast, not merely unfulfilled but bony as a wash board. Her nipple, however, is a treasure. It reminds him of the sour green gooseberries he loves to bite into. Zadonsky's erection is now fluttering wildly, all sails to the wind. He no longer cares if she sees. Finally she tells him in a barely heard whisper that she has sinned, mortally sinned. She has sinned with a goat on her father's farm, and not for the first time either. Well, yes, for the first time with a goat—before that only with dogs. Zadonsky chuckles hoarsely. His throat has become quite dry. He is trying to edge his hand under her skirt, without releasing the other hand from her nipple, but the contortion his body is forced into (he is quite old and sedentary) gives him a sudden and terrific pain in the neck and across the shoulders.

Zadonsky cries out, "Oh, Jesus! You were right to say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'"

At the sound of this outcry, and seeing the look in Zadonsky's eyes, the child tries to pull away, but he holds her fast as he lurches and stumbles towards the desk drawer. He seizes the ball of twine, but has to release her in order to undo the end of the twine which is snugly enclosed in the ball. . . .

That was the end of the rapist fantasy. That did it. That damn ball of twine. I must say I found it difficult, extremely difficult to do, imagining myself that way, a priest-rapist. Probably this is because I've never raped anyone . . . never been a priest either. Still it's disappointing in terms of . . . in terms of what, self-esteem? That my imagination had difficulty accomodating this rapist fantasy? As Freud is supposed to have said, "The problem with masturbating is that one must know how to do it well." How true! Take my Parisian art dealer for example. His name is Moise Rolland. He's a swaggering little fellow, not much higher than a dwarf, but endowed, he maintained, (well-hung is the expression he uses) like a stallion. Moise says that he must masturbate four to five times daily. If not, he gets nervous. Of course he's boasting, just as he's always boasting about the way women throw themselves at him. Moise can't board a bus or an

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airplane without having a sexual adventure. Women are always sucking him off in his seat, or the john. If it's true, I must say I envy him. I could sit in a singles bar all night for a month, and nothing would happen. That's been my experience.

I'm lying. I've never been to a singles bar. I'm afraid to, but I'm sure if I did, nothing would happen. I don't know why that's so, but it is. Some women have even told me that I'm handsome and sexually attractive, but even so, nothing like Moise's experience happens to me. I once asked Moise if he fantasized while masturbating. "Mais non!" he exclaimed, "I just beat my meat."

"A dog would have more imagination," I said.

Moise was very upset. Not about being compared to a dog. He didn't mind that at all. He minded that I thought him lacking in imagination. So much for Moise Rolland.

Getting back to my difficulty in achieving an orgasm with the priest-rapist fantasy. I just had to give up. A rapist would probably not have difficulty having an orgasm with a rape fantasy. I don't know.

Of course I'm assuming that everyone masturbates sooner or later. But if you are not a rapist and still have difficulty in understanding my difficulty, then try it yourself as they say in the TV ads.

That is too fucking clever. I wouldn't have said that, it sounds too smart alecky. On the other hand, I didn't say it. The narrator said it. He goes on to say:

Jerk off imagining yourself as a rapist. Let me know what happens, but only if it's interesting. Write me. My mail is so impersonal, bills mainly. Anyway, to get back, I wasn't able to pick up the dream and sink back into sleep. It's crazy, but what was getting between me and sodomizing that lovely behind were thoughts and notions about this book that I've written, that I'm rewriting, trying to revise.

Like me, my narrator is also writing a book. But I've already told you that.

This book was written a long time ago. As I said, it's been going on for more than ten years. I'm always thinking, ah,

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now I've gotten the right touch, the right feel, or now it's less self-conscious, more direct. There are a number of versions of this book. I have a file crammed full of manuscripts. In some versions the language is spare, bare, in others verbose, garrulous, and each time I revise, I think, this is it, this will be the final revision. So when I say I am on the final revision I have no way of knowing if this final revision will be final. It could stretch out to another ten or fifteen years, which is O.K. too, considering the problem of my friends, who think I'm writing a book about them. Let it stretch out then, ten years, twenty years, thirty years. Some of them may have died off by then. Not that I want that to happen. God forbid. As my mother would say, "You should bite your tongue." Thirty years? I could be dead by then too. I've written a book in the first person in some versions, and changed to the third in others. Sometimes I tell too little, or too much. And always, as I revise, there's the problem of my friends, as if they're all in the room with me, standing over my shoulder, jeering at me, mocking, winking, making faces, sticking out their tongues. They're angry. What will they think? What will my mother think? My mother. Well, she doesn't know about the book. Not yet, anyway. But suppose it's published, what then? Well, she can't read. She's illiterate. Ah! But she has friends who can read. So much for that. It's a different thing with my friends. Oh, they know how to read alright. And they know about the book. They talk about it. They talk about it among themselves. Sometimes they talk to me about it. Mostly they want to know if they are in it. One asks, "Is it an exposé of the art world?"

I say "What a waste of time that would be. How boring. Besides I don't even know the inside of the art world well enough to expose anything." But no one believes me.

Another friend, referring to a mutual friend, says, "If you tell the truth about *him*, you will destroy him. You know how he idolizes you. Are you trying to wreck his career?"

"No," I protest, hurt that anyone could think me capable of such viciousness. "Good god," I say, "there's no malice in the book. None! Anyway, all the characters are composites," I say, trying to sound like a professional novelist. "You know how it is when you write. You begin to invent. A character grows, he takes on his own life. And after all the one character in the book, Yulli, who people might think is me, really is the

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most ridiculous one of all, crazy, a kind of fool. And he's the one that people will think is me. And of course the character named Yulli is not me anyway, just as some character you might think is you or someone else is not you or someone else."

But my accuser remains unconvinced. "Look, if anyone is hurt, it will be me," I add, lamely.

"But why are you writing this book?" he asks with a stern accusatory look.

"Why not," I respond earnestly. "Why not? I always wanted to write. When I was a kid, it was between writing and painting and sculpture." (did I tell you that I'm a painter, an artist? And a sculptor as well?) "As I grew up, I realized I didn't have to choose between one or the other. I have this thing about writing a book, these feelings, notions, experiences, I don't know what to call them that I want to express. Why shouldn't I write?"

"So you think you're Leonardo Da Vinci?" he mocks.

This is supposed to crush me, but secretly I do worry, not about being Leonardo, but whether there is malice in the book. Will someone be hurt? Maybe that's why I keep revising, postponing the day of judgment. Also, another worry. Is there vanity in this? Is that what it's about? The hope that my friends will be impressed that I write? In fact, one girl says admiringly to me,"Gee, I didn't know you could write."

"Oh," I say modestly, "It's really not much." At least I hope I sound modest when I say it.

"What's it about," she asks?

"Well. it's really a funny book . . . oh, it's really funny." At this point I start to laugh.

"But what's it about?"

I have to evade this question, since I don't really know what it's about. So I repeat, "It's really a funny book." And then I add, "Some parts of it, though, might make you cry."

I say that so she'll think I'm serious.

"You're serious about your writing then."

I was right. But I still don't know what to say. "I'm just trying to write about a guy who's a painter, and . . ." I trail off. What to say?

"Is there a theme," she asks? She won't let go.

That awful question!

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How can I tell her that I don't really know what it's about, and after all these years? But I have to say something. "I guess it's about loneliness," I say.

"Oh," she looks disappointed. Loneliness isn't good enough for her.

"It's about death." In desperation I attempt to rescue the situation.

Ah, that's better. She perks up and starts talking about symbols and profundities and Borges and other clammy, airless Latin American writers I can't stand.

"No," I say, "I mean death, dying, like if you actually know you're going to die. That I, me, I *am* going to die. Somehow, this would be freeing, put me more in touch with life. Even make me more powerful. You see, none of us really believe we're going to die. Someone else for sure, but not me. Not me. We can't believe, because we're terrified. Or is it the other way around? Anyway, this fear makes us cautious, makes us afraid to live. It's as though we sleep always with one eye open so death won't take us unawares. Won't take us at all, in fact, if we're cautious enough, watchful, on guard. Is that any way to live?"

She shifts uneasily. She yearns for abstract symbols. She starts in again about Borges.

"Don't you see," I say "how freeing it would be to get past the fear of dying?"

"I'm not there yet," she says, looking uncomfortable.

"Neither am I," I acknowledge humbly, or hoping I sound humble. I am fascinated how she always contrives to sit so that her crotch invites attention. Her blue jeans are tight and in her seated position, her upraised knees hunched in under her chin, she gives me a superb view of her outlined crotch.

The conversation lapses.

"He who conquers the fear of death becomes Superman!" I blurt out.

Ah, she likes that better. Now she can talk about Neitzsche. She's at home again, but I can't let well enough alone.

"All energy, all life will flow through such a man," I explain with fervor. I forgot to mention I had been drinking enough so that now it was the booze that was speaking.

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Still, when I went to sleep after our conversation I lay for a long time wondering if there was anything in what I'd said. Was the book about that? About death? For the life of me, if I was going to be truthful, I couldn't see how. It troubled me. It still troubles me. Does this book have a theme? Is a theme essential? Can you write a great book (is there no end to my narcissism!) and have it lacking in a theme, not even a little theme? Maybe the theme will take care of itself. But suppose the book is published and my friends think it's trivial, theme or no theme? Or suppose, because I'm an artist, the book gets reviewed in the *New York Times* by one of their art critics, and one who happens to have a lot of contempt for me. Or suppose it just gets one of those brief reviews on the back pages of the Sunday Book Review? My first book, but I expect to get the front page! What does this say about me? I'll tell you what it says, that I'm vain and arrogant and have delusions of grandeur. Also, I have foolish dreams.

More? O.K., the truth is, I don't believe I'm vain, arrogant, etc. What do I really believe? I really don't know, and even if I did know, is it relevant? Relevance is important. Is it important for you to know what I think of myself? I have to think about this. If it seems worthwhile, I'll try to tell you later. What I can tell you now, and maybe it's enough, is that after I was well on the way to becoming rich and famous (which I happen to be, at least moderately so), my wife, who is now my ex-wife, was reminiscing, and she said, "Who would have thought when I married you twenty years ago and you didn't have a job and no prospects for even getting your art work shown, that you would become rich and famous." She sighed in that way she has, which is sadly.

I said to her, "Listen, Paulette," (Her name is really Phyllis but she insists on being called Paulette), "I never dreamed I would make any money from my art. But I'll tell you, I never, ever doubted that I was a great artist."

Her mouth made the sound of a suddenly collapsed balloon and she looked at me as if to say, "How could you!" I never forgot that look. It was certainly one of the reasons I got a divorce. You see, when we got married, my wife, who was then a naive, middle-class WASP girl, thought she was marrying a nice Jewish cripple who would never amount to anything but would be nice and interesting to have around,

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> being an artist and all that. Also, I read a lot, and that was nice too. She wanted it to be like that, that I had no future. That was a comfort to her. But somehow things turned out differently. She could forgive me for that. She's really basically decent, but when she discovered from what I'd said that I hadn't played the game, that all along I'd harbored this sense of myself, the very opposite of a Jewish cripple, that was unforgivable. Hence the look, and ultimately the divorce.

You see what revising is like for me. Backing and filling, fading and feinting. Evading. All this self-reflective crap about myself and my problems. What about Yulli, the hero of this book, and his problems?

O.K., so this book is about a crazy artist named Yulli, who some people think is a fool. Was Yulli a fool? If by fool we mean someone who does foolish things (and what else can it mean if not that?), then yes, surely Yulli was a fool. But who has not done foolish things? Granted, some foolish things are more foolish than others. I don't want to judge. My guess is that our hero's track record would qualify him as a fool, first class. You may disagree. It's not crucial. You may feel he's not that *much of a fool, certainly not in the first echelon of fools. You may even think he was not a fool at all. But why argue? Or you might think he was a fool and worse, an idiot maybe. No, that would be going too far. He had been brought up to be a fool and he did his best to be one. Logically a fool should not survive, at least not very long, since it is in the nature of a fool that he will not learn from his experience. Fortunately for Yulli, fate is sometimes kind to fools. Yulli is a rich and famous artist. Just like my narrator. Just like me, except more rich, more famous, and certainly more crazy.*

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Mark Perakh

CONTEMPORARY DISSENT IN RUSSIA: RISE, DEVELOPMENT, TRENDS

It was on March 5, 1953 that the news media of the USSR broadcast the death of its "greatest leader of science," "best friend of Soviet sportsmen," "dear father and teacher," etc., etc. It was the day of the passing of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. On that day power in the Kremlin passed to the "companions-in-arms" of the late lord, all of whom had taken an active part in the terror and purges and hence had no reservations about them. Nevertheless, this group could not afford to continue to apply Stalin's methods. Indeed, Stalin's technology of power had some unique features, and one of the most important was that no one, even his closest adherents, possessed any power or independence except for what the Boss issued. One was aware that the Boss could cancel at any time the authority granted and thus, the immunity against the merciless hand of the security organs. In the thirty-year history of Stalin's sway, cases of cruel annihilation of the tyrant's closest aids and coworkers were a matter of record.

Quite naturally, the ruling clique that inherited the apparatus of power created by the dead tyrant strove first of all to destroy the feeling of inseucrity among the new rulers. One of their first actions was to abandon Stalin's method of terror. Most likely, not one of Stalin's heirs was able to take over his throne by himself. The principal force behind the events that followed, however, was apparently not the absence of an appropriate legatee, but a spontaneous struggle of the entire top echelon to ensure themselves against possible loss of power, arrest and execution.

With an unstable equilibrium of power in the Kremlin group, its members were compelled first to eliminate the pressure of the Cheka on themselves. This led eventually to a decrease in Cheka power, to its tranformation from a superpower, higher than the Party, into a mechanism subordinate to the Party's directives. The history of this degeneration of the KGB from country boss to Party servant has not yet been written.

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During the first round of the struggle for power, the mafia's members almost immediately destroyed Stalin's private Secretariat—an ingenious ruling instrument— and then united to eliminate the man considered Stalin's most dangerous heir—the chief of the security organs, Beria—and his adherents. In 1955 the ruling group, quickly consolidating, transferred the helm to Nikita Khrushchev. No doubt this selection was not accidental. He was of pure Russian origin and almost without education (like practically all the "apparatchiks"), and had connections in the top strata of the Party apparatus; he was relatively young, with a natural common sense and a certain wit, and homely enough not to seem dangerous. All of this ensured the quick victory of Khrushchev, even by the first round, against Malenkov, who was an outstanding adminstrator in Stalin's apparatus but not good at intrigue.

As the incarnation of the will of the new ruling group trying to secure itself against a repetition of the situation during Stalin's time, Khrushchev tried to "destalinize." He knew that establishing the power of the ruling group meant destroying the halo around the name of the late demigod. In February 1956, as the twentieth session of the Congress was about to end, Khrushchev unexpectedly delivered a report subsequently called "The Secret Report of Khrushchev," although the word "secret" seems inappropriate. Khrushchev gave this talk in the presence of several thousand listeners. Although it was not published in the mass media, the speech was reproduced in thousands of copies and read at meetings in thousands of factories, institutes and universities. I attended a meeting in the Spring of 1956 at the Alma-Ata Institute of Agriculture where the so-called "secret" report of Khrushchev was read. About a thousand people were present and admission was free.

Absolute consistency in mass indoctrination was inherent in Stalinism. The Party's history, as it was hammered into the mind of every man and woman from kindergarten on and in every factory and institution, was always presented as a chain of events, but never as a development. The Party always was, is and will be the same: infallible, impeccable, with a monopoly on absolute truth. Around 1954, at a meeting in the Stalinabad Agriculture Institute in the town of Stalinabad (presently Dushanbe), the floor had been given to one of the teachers, who was of indigenous origin (a Tadjic). In his speech this man said, "Earlier, just after the revolution, when the authority of our Party was not yet as high as it is presently . . ." and so on. These words caused a shock throughout the audience. The speech was immediately

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interrupted and the Dean of the Faculty, named Mescheryakov, took the floor and said with theatrical indignation: "I have to state that the previous speaker has made a coarse political error. The authority of our great Party never was lesser or greater. Our great Party always was and is an incarnation of the will of the masses, monolithically united around the Party and around our great leader and loved teacher, comrade Stalin" (lengthy applause). Never during Stalin's rule was it acknowledged that the Party or its leaders had ever committed the smallest error. If the Pope is infallible only while speaking "urbi et orbi," the Communist Party of the USSR was infallible always and everywhere. Suddenly, in this report of the Party's First Secretary, it was announced that for thirty years or so the country had been ruled by a cruel and ignorant tyrant who had been in the habit of annihilating mercilessly not only Party enemies but his own devoted followers as well.

Anyone not living in Russia at that time can hardly imagine the shock wave that swept the entire country with these words. The atmosphere was immediately transformed. The blow that had just been dealt their god was actually a blow to all "Soviet men," a negation of all of their ideas. Thus Khrushchev's report initiated many changes in the USSR, opening a period called by Ilya Ehrenburg "the thaw." Actually, the first signs of a thaw had been evident even before Khrushchev's report. The feeling had first begun with certain events of the years 1953–56: the destruction of several links in Stalin's Cheka-chain in 1953–54, rapprochement with Tito, and the dismantling of Beria's power among other things.

It is an old tradition in Russia that the spirit of the people is expressed not by political figures but by writers. The first break in the muteness of Stalin's time probably came in an article entitled "On Sincerity in Literature" by Vladimir Pomerantsev which appeared in the December 1953 issue of *Novy Mir* magazine. The magazine's editor at that time was Aleksander Tvardovsky who was later to play an important role in the appearance of Solzhenitsyn on the literary scene.

Pomerantsev's paper was not particularly audacious by Western standards. The idea it expressed was that lies are incompatible with real literature. But in a country still trembling with fear, his words seemed an expression of outstanding courage. Pomerantsev's general discussion on sincerity and lies in literature was applied by his readers to the Soviet pseudo-literature of the Stalin era. Oppression followed immediately. Tvardovsky was replaced by the yes-man Konstantin Simonev, and a torrent of abuse was directed at Pomerantsev by such official writers as Surkov, Korneichuk, and Fadeyev. But nonetheless

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the paper had been published, and neither editor nor author was executed or even arrested.

The next breakthrough came following Khrushchev's "secret" report. In the fall of 1956, in the same *Novy Mir* magazine of which Simonev was then editor-in-chief, a novel appeared by an almost unknown writer, Vladimir Dudintsev, entitled *Not From Bread Alone*. . . . Simonev, who had access to the Party's top stratum, had evidently felt the new winds and hurried to display "audacity."

The impact of Dudintsev's novel was enormous. For a Western reader the novel would hardly appear to be very courageous or even anti-Soviet. But from the viewpoint of the Soviet literature of those years it was like thunder out of a clear sky. The novel describes the vicissitudes of an inventor, Lopatkin, who fights with great fortitude against the monstrous Soviet bureaucratic machine. The true picture of Soviet bureaucracy was a new phenomenon in Soviet literature. The novel contains vivid characterizations of Soviet bureaucrats, such as top-ranking officials like Drosdov, minister Afanassiy Ivanovich Dyadgora, ministerial executive official Vadik Nevrayev, and others.

Today Dudintsev's novel is rarely mentioned, but I think its significance at the time was even greater than Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* would have later on. Simonov, who had not sensed the exact direction of the wind, was dismissed from his position as editor. The novel became the object of malicious abuse from the Soviet literary bosses frightened by the fact that truths in it disclosed the lies of their own existence. However, it was too late. The winds of dissent began to blow with the appearance of Dudintsev's novel.

In 1956–57, in many parts of the country circles began to form for the purpose of discussing political and social problems. Public opinion, entirely absent in Stalin's Russia, was about to emerge. The most important role in these circles was played by the youth, those who had been children during Stalin's bloodlettings and, in comparison to their elders, relatively free from the omnipresent fear.

One of the most interesting events of those years, almost unknown in the West, occurred in 1956 at the Urals Polytechnic Institute, a huge institution for the preparation of all types of engineers, in Sverdlovsk, the greatest city of the industrial Urals. In 1955 a regular "election" of Komsomol functionaries was to be held. The usual procedure in those "elections" consisted of some standard performance in which all candidates for the positions of Komsomol secretaries, members of Komsomol committees, etc., were appointed in advance by the Party organs, while at the election meetings themselves only long and

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tedious "prayers" about the "Great Party," "building of Communism," "malicious American imperialists," and "West German revenge-seekers," were delivered. This time, however, the performance unexpectedly deviated from the usual scenario. A young activist, Artur Nemelkov, delivered an unusually courageous speech. He called for the end of Party control over youth organizations; moreover, he actually called for the introduction of a multi-party system into the country. The audience, all young students, listened to Nemelkov with amazement. And the heavens did not crack above the daredevil. Then many others, student after student, took the floor to support Nemelkov. The representatives of foreign students, the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, demanded an end to the occupaion of their soil. For three days the meeting went on and the embarrassed and frustrated Party apparatus could not succeed in taking control. It was probably the first time dissenters ever used the possibilities implied in the formal democratism of Soviet official regulations, this time in the statutes of the Komsomol. Several days later the Party's organs, recovering from the initial blow, implemented their oppressions in the usual way and the burst of dissent fizzled out.

The circles of dissenters that emerged in 1956–57 had no press of their own and never spoke out at open meetings. But this time the KGB, having recovered from the shock of its loss of power over the Party and enlarged by new "cadres" from the Party apparatus who took control over the Cheka professionals, saw in these a pretext to justify their existence. The situation was different from that of Stalin's time, when the Cheka routinely fabricated "enemies": now the youth, discussing the events on their own initiative in an unorthodox way, became an ideal object of persecution.

Khrushchev was a true Stalin arms-bearer and a participant in the terror campaigns for many years. Informed now by the KGB of the rise in dissent, Khrushchev cancelled the short "moratorium" on KGB activity, and in 1957, a new wave of arrests and persecutions began. The activity of many dissenting groups at that time thus remained unknown to the greater public.

One of the first such groups was that of Pimenov-Weil. Revolt Pimenov, a young Leningrad mathematician of outstanding talent, and Boris Weil, an eighteen-year-old student from Kursk, exchanged letters in which dissenting ideas were expressed. These letters were traced by the KGB. Soon afterwards, the KGB knew that Pimenov headed a circle of young people in Leningrad, including his wife Irina Verblovskaya and several students of Leningrad institutions: Danilov,

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Zaslavskiy and others. The main activity of the group was discussing the history of the October upheaval. Members of the circle jokingly called it "a circle of lunatics at large." The credo of Pimenov was formulated as follows: "The land—for kolkhosniks, the factories—for workers, the culture—for intelligensia." Pimenov decoded these formulations in the following way: "The land for kolkhosniks means that the Kolkhoses are entitled to manage their jobs independently." The program of Pimenov thus did not include cancelling the Kolkhos system. "Factories—for workers" was to be understood in the framework of the Yugoslavian version. "Culture—for intelligensia" was interpreted as a relinquishing of the Party's strict control over every manifestation of spiritual life. Generally, Pimenov and his colleagues were socialists and did not try at all to destroy the existing social order. The entire group was arrested and its members sentenced to long imprisonment.

Pimenov's group was not the only one. In Leningrad at the same time another group, that of the brothers Izhboldins and Fomichev, fell victim to the KGB; the group members were accused of being U.S. spies. The real reason for the persecution of the group was its dissent. Specifically, Fomichev leaned to a religious world outlook. Another example: in the beginning of 1958 in Alma-Ata, a small group that included K. Frusin and the author of this paper was arrested. We stood for a much more radical program than the Pimenov circle. At the end of 1957, many handwritten leaflets were reproduced photographically and circulated throughout the city; in these a call was made to vote against the official candidates in the coming elections to the Supreme Soviet. The "powerful" KGB turned out to be powerless in finding the authors and distributors of these leaflets. Our arrest had no connection to them; it was the result of informers' reports to the KGB that Frusin and I had "talked in an anti-Soviet spirit."

At this time, the activity of a large group of dissenters began. The group consisted mainly of Moscow University teachers headed by Krasnopevtsev. All the members of this group were Party and Komsomol activists who united under a banner of "socialist democracy"; they oriented themselves toward the Yugoslav version of Communism. All of them underwent cruel oppression and were sentenced to long prison terms.

All of these above groups, in which thousands of young people participated, constituted a sort of prehistory of contemporary dissent in the USSR. An increase in Cheka persecutions at the end of the fifties strangled these first sprouts of independent thinking; the members of

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these circles found themselves in prisons and punitive camps for several years.

The next wave of dissent came in the early sixties. Once again, the banner was raised by youth. The "free thinking" of this time seems to have had no direct connection with the dissent of the fifties; new groups of protesters emerged without obvious links to their predecessors. In 1960 a young student in Moscow, Alexander Ginsburg (now well-known as a fighter for human rights and Solzhenitsyn's representative in the distribution of financial help to families of political prisoners) began publishing a typewritten magazine, *Syntaxis,* one of the first samples of what is today called "Samizdat." In this magazine the problem of democratization of the country was openly discussed. The journal immediately won great popularity among Moscow youth. Following *Syntaxis* several other similar publications appeared, such as *Pheonix,* edited by Yuri Galanskov (who died in 1972 in a prison camp because of lack of medical treatment), and *Boomerang,* edited by Vladimir Osipov. All three of these editors were subsequently arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment (Ginsburg had alread been arrested by 1960, Galanskov in 1961, and Osipov in 1962). At this time the names of the now well-known writers Bukovsky, Chalidze, Zukerman, and Litvinov were first heard. But these names represent merely the tip of an iceberg. Thousands of names of dissenters who were suppressed and persecuted in the early sixties remain unknown to the general public and are buried somewhere in the KGB's files. Let me give as an example just one name. In 1962, a small youth group existed in Moscow, the members of which discussed actual problems of Soviet life in a rather unorthodox manner. The most prominent member of this group was an eighteen-year-old student, Adrian Tarasov, who, according to all his comrades, was a man of outstanding ability—honest, courageous, and an original thinker. In 1963 Tarasov was arrested by the KGB and sentenced to imprisonment, never to be heard from again. There were thousands of others like Tarasov, whose names the KGB managed to conceal in its secret files.

In 1963 began the activities of a youth group that became widely known. This group, consisting of students from Moscow University and other institutions, called themselves "SMOG," an abbreviation with several explanations: "Samoye Molodoye Obshtchestvo Geniev" (The Youngest Society of Geniuses); "Smelost, mysl, obras, glubina" (Courage, Thought, Image, Profundity), etc. Among the "SMOGists" were L. Gubanov, V. Batashev, Yu. Kublanovsky, Yu. Vishnevskaya, A. Urusov, V. Aleynikov, V. Kalugin, S. Morosov, and others. The average

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age was about eighteen. The group published a typewritten magazine *Sphinx* and a collection, *Tchu*. SMOG stressed demands for freedom of self-expression as well as the cessation of Party control over artistic activity. On April 14, 1965, SMOGists organized a demonstration in Moscow's Pushkin Square. This demonstration unexpectedly drew a large number of participants, many of whom were not SMOG members. Posters bearing demands for freedom of the press were carried. In response, swarms of KGB agents and "druzhinniks" ("volunteer" detachments organized by the authorities to aid the police) immediately attacked the demonstrators. Shortly afterwards SMOGists were subjected to severe persecution.

The next landmark in the development of contemporary dissent in Russia was the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial. Andrey Sinyavsky, an eminent contemporary Russian writer and literary critic, succeeded in the sixties in publishing abroad, as he had no chance of being published in the USSR. His work in no way followed the iron-clad rules of official Soviet art. Moreover, Sinyavsky used a Jewish-sounding pen name, Abram Terz. Eventually these works penetrated the borders of the USSR and were circulated in Samizdat, although the real author, concealed under an odd pseudonym, remained undiscovered. Yuli Daniel, another gifted writer and poet, published his creations abroad at the same time, under the pen name Nikolay Arzhak.

When the KGB discovered the true identities of Terz and Arzhak, Sinyavsky and Daniel were arrested and put on trial, accused of anti-Soviet activity. (There is no law in the USSR forbidding either publication of works abroad or the use of pen names.) The impact of the entire affair, however, turned out to be exactly contrary to what the authorities had anticipated. A wave of indignation spread throughout the country, especially among the youth. On December 5, 1965, in Pushkin Square in Moscow, a youth demonstration directed against the trial took place. Naturally the authorities reacted in the only way they knew, by brutality. However, at this time they began to realize that the whip was no longer the most effective weapon. Although they did continue to use it, and there were some additional trials, for instance that of Galanskov, Ginsburg, Dobrovolsky and Lashkova, Gabay and others. However, the authorities began to seek new methods of oppression. A favorite means became the committing of people with "undesirable" ideas to special mental institutions. Many sane people were put into the so-called "psychushka," among them Bukovsky, Kusnetsov, Paramonov, Fin, Rybakov, Shashenkov, Borisov, Feinberg, Plyushch, and many others.

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These persecutions, however, did not lead to the desired result: in the latter half of the sixties dissent spread as never before. In 1967 a group of dissenters from Leningrad appeared under the name of VSKhON ("Vserossiyskiy Khristiancko-Sozialny Soyuz Osvobozhdeniya Naroda": The All-Russian Christian-Social Union for the Liberation of the People). The ideology of this organization was similar to the religious and nationalistic philosophy of Nikolay Berdyaev. One feature of the VSKhON was that no Jew was allowed to join its ranks. The most prominent figures of the group were Ogurtsov, Sado, Vagin, and Borodin. In 1967 VSKhON was destroyed by the KGB and its members sentenced to long terms (twenty-eight people were put on trial).

The year 1968 proved to be a turning point in the development of contemporary dissent in Russia. During this year the famous memorandum of Sakharov entitled "Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom" appeared. An outstanding physicist, Andrey Dmitrievich Sakharov was elected Academician at the age of thirty-four, a case unprecedented in the history of the Academy of Sciences, the most prestigious institution in the country. Sakharov had played a significant part in the development of the H-bomb in the USSR. During the fifties and sixties, he belonged to the highest elite. He possessed all the privileges of the members of this closed caste, with unlimited welfare rights and access to the highest governmental circles. Well aware of the consequences, in 1968 Sakharov openly declared his unorthodox views. Such dissent on the part of a high-ranking member of the elite at first puzzled the Kremlin rulers. For a while measures taken against him were half-hearted. But as Sakharov's activities progressed, the wall between him and the oligarchy became higher, until finally Sakharov was deprived of all privileges and subjected to various persecutions. Only the fame of an H-bomb inventor and the outcries from the West following each action saved Sakharov from arrest. At present, Sakharov is in a state of complete isolation and lives under permanent surveillance and pressure from the authorities. When in 1975 Sakharov won the Nobel Prize, it was an exciting event for the broad circle of dissenters both in and outside of Russia.

In the same year the memorandum by Sakharov appeared, 1968, the typewritten *Chronicle of Current Events* was begun. This bimonthly magazine contained news of all that was happening among dissenters, including all sorts of persecutions by the authorities. This publication set the pace for many others of its kind (e.g., *Jews in the USSR, News of the Exodus, The Ukranian Bulletin, Review, Informbulletin, Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania,* etc.). The

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KGB did its utmost to suppress the *Chronicle of Current Events*, but in vain. Despite countless persecutions and arrests of alleged editors of this magazine, it continued to appear, apparently changing editorial boards, while imprisoned contributors of the *Chronicle* were immediately replaced by several others. Recently (September 1976), Issue no. 40 of the *Chronicle* was reported to have appeared. Several other underground papers continue to appear to this day, circulating throughout the country and demonstrating the complete alienation of the authorities from the people.

Once again, it should be stressed that all these underground journals, well-known in the West, represent only a drop in the bucket. In addition to these publications, many others remain relatively unknown. At the end of the sixties in Krassnoyarsk, a large industrial town in Eastern Siberia, an extremely anti-Soviet group consisting of students and young workers was established that attempted not only to spread antigovernment views, but also to provoke armed struggle against the authorities. The KGB discovered the group and managed to conceal its existence from the public. But some information did seep through the KGB screen. The name of one of the group's main activists is known—Valery Petraskho, an eighteen-year-old worker. Another example: in 1969 an underground organization emerged among the sailors and officers of the Balticum Navy, called "Union for the Struggle for Political Rights." Specific details on this group are locked in the files of the KGB, but all the participants were court-marshalled and cruelly punished.

At the end of the sixties and early in the seventies, nationalistic strivings in many parts of the Soviet empire intensified.

The most significant national movement is in the Ukraine. The Ukraine is a large region exceeding, for example, the area of France, with a population of about fifty million and vast natural resources. Despite hundreds of years of Russian rule, the Ukrainians have preserved their language and original culture. The authorities of Czarist Russia carried out a forcible russification, and the Soviet rulers stubbornly continue these efforts, implemented to a large extent by Ukrainians themselves., russified representatives of the indigenous population who occupy the majority position in the local Party hierarchy. Hence there is a deep division in the Ukraine between the russified elite serving the Moscow bosses and the nationally oriented groups, where a hatred of the Moscow rulers (and sometimes even of the Russian people in general) reigns.

In 1969 a Kiev historian, Ivan Dziuba, at the request of Party officials did research concerning russification in the Ukraine. The

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results presented in Dziuba's classified work frightened the Party bosses so badly that the manuscript was immediately withdrawn from circulation. However, Dziuba's thoroughly documented manuscript was soon circulated in Samizdat. Its impact on the Ukrainian intelligensia was profound. Ivan Dziuba himself became for a time one of the prominent figures in the Ukrainian national movement. Unfortunately, however, Dziuba could not withstand the authorities' pressure. After unbearable torture, Dziuba wrote a letter of "remorse" and retracted his own work. But the real reasons for Dziuba's behavior were obvious, and the impact of this work remained strong.

During the sixties and thus far into the seventies, the authorities have suppressed all evidence of Ukrainian nationalistic expression. Thousands of dissenters protesting the russification of the Ukraine and striving for a national renaissance, and, as a long-term goal, for independence, have been put into prison. Among them are Svytoslav Karavansky, Nina Strokataya, Stefaniya Shabatura, Igor Kalynets, Ivan Svetlychny, Vyacheslav Chornovil, Irina Stasiv, Ivan Gel. The most famous of the Ukrainian activists is probably Valentin Moroz, who showed extraordinary courage under the notorious conditions of the Vladimir Political Prison. Moroz is now acknowledged as leader of the Ukrainian resistance.

A strong national movement emerged in the Balticum as well. In Lithuania the national movement took the form of a struggle for the revival of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. This movement put forth such heroes as Romas Kalanta, a student who set himself on fire and burned to death in protest against the annihilation of Lithuanian independence. In Estonia in the beginning of 1971, a so-called "program of democrats" was circulated. That same year in this small country an underground Estonian National Front emerged.

In the beginning of the seventies, a movement for the independence of Armenia came into existence. An underground party, "National Unity of Armenia," was created, which became known after the trial late in 1974 of its activists, Ayrikyan, Arshakyan, Zograbyan and others. Similar phenomena appeared in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Tajicistan, Latvia and other parts of the empire, though on a smaller scale.

Two national movements, those of the Crimean Tatars and of the Jews, possess some special features. The Crimean Tatars are a small group of Turkish origin who have inhabited the Crimean peninsula from time immemorial. Unfortunately, the Crimean peninsula is an extremely attractive piece of land that the Tatars' Slavic neighbors have always been eager to possess. In 1944, after the Crimea was liberated

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from German occupation, Stalin secretly declared all the Crimean Tatars "traitors of the fatherland" and accused them of collaborating with the Germans. He ordered the deportation of all Crimean Tatars, including women and children, from the Crimea to the desert lands of Central Asia. The deportation was implemented by special detachments in an extremely cruel manner. Thousands of Tatars perished in the course of the journey, and thousands of others died later under the terrible conditions of the settlements in Central Asia.

It must be mentioned that the Crimean Tatars were not the only people subjected to this treatment. A similar fate befell the Karachaevs, Balkars, Meskhs, Volga Germans and others. In the fifties, after Stalin's death, the indiscriminate accusations of treason were officially acknowledged as false. Some of the peoples, although now much fewer in number, were allowed to return to their native soil, but not all of them. The Meskhs, Volga Germans, and Tatars were never permitted to return home. Furthermore, any Tatar who individually attempted to return to the Crimea was persecuted and, as a rule, compelled to leave the Crimean land. Thus, notwithstanding the rehabilitation of the Tatar people and the retraction of the accusation of treason, resettlement of the Tatars on their own soil is absolutely restricted.

The Tatars never recovered from the loss of their homeland. At the end of the sixties a movement of Crimean Tatars concentrated in Central Asia became especially strong. The authorities suppressed this movement brutally, and many trials of Tatar activists have taken place. The Tatar movement has several heroic figures, for example Mustafa Jemilev, now serving his fourth prison sentence. Many non-Tatar dissenters have been active in defence of the Tatar national cause as well. The best known is General Pyotr Grigorenko, an eminent military professional who, like Sakharov, rejected his high position in the elite and joined the struggle for justice. Grigorenko was deprived of his rank, his pension, and was finally placed for many years in a mental hospital. Another exponent of the Tatar cause, also a non-Tatar, was Ilya Gabai, who in 1973 committed suicide because of KGB persecutions.

The Jewish national movement, directed solely toward free emigration to Israel, has played a key role in the development of all dissent in the USSR, largely because of its overwhelming support from abroad. The movement reached a high point with the Jackson amendment, which tried to link the problem of Jewish emigration with U.S. laws regulating trade with the USSR. In 1971 the authorities attempted to suppress this movement completely with several trials. The most notorious was the "airplane trial" in Leningrad, where two out of

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fifteen accused activists of the Zionist movement, Mark Dymshits and Eduard Kusnetsov, were sentenced to death. The authorities would probably have performed the executions, notwithstanding the fact that the alleged crime was never committed. However, at precisely the same time in Spain, several Basque nationalists were sentenced to death. Immediately a strong world outcry in protest against the executions arose, which the Soviet authorities joined. Franco lifted the death sentence, and the Soviet authorities had no choice but to do the same for Dymshits and Kusnetsov. Their sentence was changed to fifteen years imprisonment in "special hard camps." Thus Franco actually saved the lives of two Jewish activists in Russia. The impact of the Leningrad trial as well as other anti-Jewish trials in 1971 and 1972 was the reverse of what authorities had anticipated. Excited by the solidarity shown from abroad, the Jewish movement grew. For the first time in the history of the USSR the authorities were compelled to concede, and the gates of the country were opened to a limited extent. Within a few years' time, more than 120,000 people left. The success of the Jewish movement had an important psychological effect: it showed that determined and well-planned actions could compel the Soviet organs of power to yield.

The opposition movement, which reached its height at the beginning of the seventies, now seems to be in decline. There are several reasons for this. Many dissenting activists are currently serving time in prison camps, while others have emigrated. Some dissenters have been forcibly exiled, among them Solzhenitsyn, Maksimov, Litvinov, Galitch, Sinyavsky, Nekrassov, Chalidze, Korzhaven, Amalric, and Plyushch. Moreover, in the West one sees a decline of interest in Soviet affairs. Once the evidence of outright dissent in the USSR caused a sensation. By now, however, it has become a trivial event. However, the attention of the free world is crucial to the development of freedom of thought in the USSR. In many cases it is the only protection the dissenters have against the KGB. When the KGB discovers a new group of dissenters unknown in the West, a cruel blow is struck immediately. However, when a dissenting group succeeds in declaring its existence, aims, and activity loudly enough, the KGB often uses relatively "soft" means. Cases in point are the Soviet division of Amnesty International, and Sakharov's group.

One may assume that the decline in dissent is to a significant extent merely apparent and that the opposition movement is on the eve of a new stage. It seems certain that one of the most significant features of the new stage will be a demarcation of opposition groups according to ideology. In the sixties all the dissenting movements seemed rela-

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tively homogeneous. The trends common to all dissenters were refusal to adopt the official ideology and the demand for human rights. In the course of development, the ideological distinctions among various dissenting groups has become more and more obvious. These ideologies may be forerunners of the political parties of the future.

To analyze the trends in contemporary Soviet dissent, one is compelled to simplify the picture by selecting certain principles for classifying the dissenting groups. They can be classified by means of three main criteria. The first criterion is the group's location on the international-national axis (nationalistic axis for short). The second is its location on the liberal-totalitarian axis, and the third, location on the atheistic-religious axis (religious axis). Using these criteria, we are still far from understanding the question in all its complexity. At least, however, such an approach ensures a more adequate analysis than the division into rightists and leftists, which lost all rational meaning long ago.

The ruling oligarchy in the USSR occupies the extreme "right" position on the totalitarian-liberal axis. On the religious axis it is located on the atheistic end. As for the nationalistic axis, however, the situation is far from simple. Indeed, official Soviet ideology proclaims "internationalism," advertising the so-called "friendship among the Soviet peoples." The facts prove, however, that the so-called "Union republics" are no more than colonies of the Moscow rulers. From this point of view, the Soviet authorities should be placed on the chauvinistic extreme of the nationalist axis. Moreover, inside the ruling group an increasingly influential faction has evidently arisen that tries to adapt Russian nationalism to the official ideology. This group within the ruling apparatus may be called "national-communist," and is in fact similar to Hitler's national socialists. Its growing influence is due to the fact that Marxist ideology in Russia has virtually ceased to have meaning. For the Soviet people Marxism is closely connected with all the failures of the regime, and the top level of the oligarchy is well aware of the need for a new ideology. To many top officials, Russian chauvinism seems a successful substitute for the bankrupt ideology of Lenin and Stalin.

Among the Party members another group may be called "communists with human faces." The adherents of this group hope to save the Party's strength by means of a certain "liberalization" while preserving the one-party system. The historian Roy Medvedev, now editor of a Samizdat magazine, *The Twentieth Century*, edited for a long time another Samizdat journal, *Political Diary*, in which these views were expressed. While Medvedev obviously belongs to the dissent,

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his activities nevertheless are tolerated by the authorities. The views of Medvedev and of other representatives of this trend such as General P. Grigorenko, and former kolkhos head I. Yachimovich seem to be influential in certain circles of Party functionaries, yet at the same time this group seems to be fairly isolated from the dissenters. Medvedev's views have changed. Several years ago, he was an adherent of the one-party system, while recently there have been signs of his moving to a position closer to social-democratic. A similar development is evident in the views of another representative of this trend—Lev Kopelev, a talented literary critic and publicist (depicted in the character of Rubin in Solzhenitsyn's novel "The First Circle").

In recent years the dissenters with Russian nationalistic tendencies have become influential. From 1970 to 1974 one such group was concentrated around a semilegal Samizdat magazine *Veche*. Its founder, Vladimir Osipov, was sentenced to eight years of hard labor in 1974. On the nationalistic axis this group occupied a chauvinistic position, ranging from the relatively moderate nationalism of Osipov himself to the extreme chauvinism of V. Khaibulin or G. Shimanov. The group's location on the totalitarian axis was ambiguous, since the speeches of members usually focused on national problems, and an antitotalitarian trend was not obvious in those speeches. Moreover, the group members stressed their loyalty to the existing regime, while arguing for the revival of Russian nationalism. On the religious axis, various positions were present in the group, from the atheistic-nationalism of Stroganov to the religious-nationalism of Osipov. In 1974 a deep split occurred among its members and the group collapsed. Osipov and several of his adherents (for instance, V. Rodionov) had taken a moderate stand, particularly regarding anti-Semitism and chauvinism, which had repulsed many dissenters during *Veche*'s activity. The majority of the *Veche* group, however, adopted an extremely chauvinistic stand, eventually exiling Osipov from his own journal. There is evidence that among those *Veche* people who caused the journal's collapse were direct agents of the KGB.

Solzhenitsyn and his adherents also take a nationalistic position. Their nationalistic feelings, however, are far less extreme than those of the *Veche* group. Solzhenitsyn is certainly one of the strongest fighters against the totalitarian regime in Russia. On the other hand, he has stated that democracy does not fit Russia's needs. At a press conference in Stockholm, arguing against "antidemocratic" accusations, Solzhenitsyn said: "I am not against democracy in general and not against democracy in Russia, but I am for a good democracy and for approaching it in Russia in a smooth, careful, slow way." Solzhenitsyn's group

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has a well-defined religious position, arguing for the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church.

A combination of views, differing to a certain extent from that of Solzhenitsyn, is represented by a group that may be called "Christian Democrats." One of the eminent representatives of this group is the writer Vladimir Maksimov, now editing the journal *Continent* in Paris, which is the mouthpiece of the so-called "third emigration." This group occupies a strong antitotalitarian position: they are liberals. They are also members of the Russian Orthodox Church. And they are Russian nationalists desiring to preserve the integrity of the vast country, but without extremism. In practice, the composition of this group is not influenced by national origin. A significant portion of the group members are russified or even baptized Jews—for example, the eminent poets Aleksander Galich and Naum Korzhavin. The views typical of this group are rather widespread among the humanist intelligensia and the technocrats of the intermediate levels in Russia.

A significant position among Russian dissenters is held by the group that may be called "liberals." The main figure of this group is Andrey Sakharov. Sakharov occupies an internationalist, atheist, and antitotalitarian position. In Sakharov's group the struggle for human rights is stressed regardless of ideological differences. Among Sakharov's adherents are many representatives of the scientific elite, such as Dr. Yu. Orlov, Dr. S. Kovalev, and Dr. V. Turchin. Sakharov enjoys a common respect on the part of all the dissenting groups and his moral authority among the representatives of all the trends is extraordinary. In certain respects he must be regarded as the acknowledged leader of the entire opposition movement. Solzhenitsyn, who has earned great respect as a writer and a fighter against the totalitarian system in the USSR, has adherents, but many people do not share his political ideas, his interpretation of history, his predictions for the future of Russia. One must not, however, neglect Solzhenitsyn's enormous recent achievement in explaining to Western society the nature of Soviet totalitarianism.

Another group of dissenters may be called "social democrats." Many representatives of this group are now emigrating to the West. They occupy an antitotalitarian and extremely internationalistic position. D. Litvinov represents an atheistic trend in this group while A. Levitin-Krasnov takes a religious position.

The national movements in the Balticum, Armenia, Moldavia, and so on, do not explicitly formulate any political aims connected with the social structure of the country, but limit themselves to the aims of their national liberation. On the other hand, the national

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movement in Lithuania is intensely colored by Catholic religious spirit. In the Ukraine the nationalistic movement is definitely antitotalitarian. The Jewish movement deliberately dissociates itself from the "general democratic" opposition, concentrating solely on the problem of the outflow of Jews. However, this dissociation has a mainly tactical significance, since practically all the activists of the Zionist movement occupy antitotalitarian positions, while on the religious axis the representatives of the Jewish movement occupy varying positions.

An objective analysis of support for the different varieties of dissent among the population seems impossible at present. Mikhail Agursky, who adheres to Solzhenitsyn's views, holds that the most popular views in contemporary Russia are those of Solzhenitsyn. On the other hand, the representatives of more leftist trends, such as A. Levitin-Krasnov or V. Belotserkovsky, are of the opinion that the liberal-socialistic position is most prevalent among the Russian people today, at least among the intelligentsia. The representatives of neo-slavophilism, for example M. Vagin or A. Udodov, argue that the nationalistic way of thinking is the most typical of the Russian people. None of these claims, though made out of heartfelt convictions, has any objective confirmation. In my opinion two trends with the best chance of obtaining mass support in contemporary Russia are first, the nationalistic trend of Osipov and his followers, and second, the liberal trend represented by Sakharov. It seems to me that between these two movements, with all their nuances, the main struggle within the framework of Russian dissent will occur, the struggle for the minds of tomorrow's Russia. One cannot predict the exact forms these two trends will adopt in the future. But the result of this struggle will determine the destiny of Russia and perhaps that of all mankind.

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POEMS

Three Poems by Art Lange

(from) COMPOSITION

Day grows rapidly suspended in time
in vacant space its long advancing column
lofty like luminous day, when the world was weak.
Like the clashed edges of two words we wore

on our fingertips, without magnificence.
In the cold weight of winter you are yourself
I am someone else. And am affirmed
someone else in vague terms burning like brandy

amid the intimacies of strangers in a silent street
that living in air symbolized the departing adventure.
But the inner compulsion dropped out of this
dream, voiceless and soft, leaving only what you see,

mostly memory. Its veiled withdrawals
rises from land and sea to obliterate depths,
the composition of blue sea with heavy ease.
The inhuman making choice that fosters resolve—

lakes are more reasonable, unconscious of love
or look, standing you look on stars.
Not your silent selves soft in your dreams
but imageless and projecting the long channels

to recreate the watery words. A waveless sea
a ship that reels when the womb widened
so that we feel and feeling it around you
becomes the sea it falsifies

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and will starve at last on the blue waste.
And you, reckless in the dim rooms
are not now near, in the flush and height
in a confusion of fire, awaiting its end.

Secreted until then and wound in the imminence
we shall forget by day to see,
this is its essense: a ripening gladness
jotted down in the dark under empty covers

like a carving in space withholding light
while lighting the obscure word; lounging life wholly
like a whore, enduring a rancorous heart
and substituting stratagems of the spirit for

a surface pain. In the quiet there
they talk of the weather; it happens.
Day, night and man shaking off doubt
laid in the leaves bitten by blizzards

suspended in air behind the quiet house.
It is as if there were a hired bed
and bright, a jar phosphorously kept
in a dim low-raftered room suspended in air

as nothing ever is. But if there be something
suspended in air it be perfect fear
escaping each morning but gaining its strength
in a senseless syllable seeking the nerve

of nearer water—a visible hole
or cancerous morning space in the embrace.
And small, in the plasm of the mood
in a world of ideas stillborn on the table

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of imagination. Now in my ear
a souvenir in solid fire flickering
under high fractured cliffs. As the eye closes
the clamorous ear pursues the curve of the body

so avid and nude and beautiful and so you
like the sky over the graveyard.

SONNET

Tod und das Mädchen Op. Posth. Ein
Deutches Requiem Op. 45 Meerestille und
glückliche Fahrt Op. 112 Les Francs-Juges
Op. 3 Francesca da Rimini Op. 32 La
Stravaganza Op. 4 Ouvertüre zu A. V. Kotzebues
Festspiel "König Stephen" oder "Ungarns
erster Wohltäter" Op. 117 Herzog Blaubarts
Burg Op. 11 Verklärte Nacht Op. 4 Begleitungsmusik
Op. 34 Saga-Drøm Op. 39 Nusch-Nuschi Tänze
Op. 20 Hin und Zuruck Op. 45a
Davidsbündlertänze Op. 6 Der Hirt auf
dem Felsen D. 965 Schwanengesang D. 957 Cosi
Fan Tutti K. 588 Thamos, König in Ägypten K.
345 Gottes Zeit ist der Aller beste Zeit BWV 106

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SONNET

after Rilke

Will transformation.
We liked the white
that helped feed on you. The earth
from far away the god is the place
that heals. Torn open by us ever and
again, only the dead drink . . .
we always overtake . . . all things want to float
but straight. Dance the orange
in the trampled meadow, see that you
do not like to know
about the creature that does not
exist. One horn. And this gave the
creature such strength, it took away the days.
We are only what we praise.

Bernadette Mayer

THE MARBLE FAUN

Daytimes it's eating and food
It's not that I've a wish to imitate
Nights working and books
Or be another
But as all men and women want to be like or unlike
A particular mother
The milk for yogurt cools down
I wish it would cool faster

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So I can't avoid it either
I found a book for my sister about old and new lace
A testament to Savoy's Queen Margherita
Not Savoy Massachusetts but Savoia, Italy
The author a woman named Cora from Chicago, 1893
My mother never ate yogurt
And brought home the bread in a white waxed bag
I swear the milk takes hours to cool
No more B-ls now it's hotter than hell
Milk down to 159°, watch and sit still
There's always the crack in the world to excite me
It goes down to China and then to infinity
Yesterday I got a letter from a friend who's a whore
I don't mean a proletarian streetwalker
But a prostituter of meanings
Of fears about old money
Sickness and old age
Now the silly moon is rising again
That paper tiger, I knew her when
Luckily no letters at all today
Only a note of thanks and a little gas bill

Things to do with milk, ice cream
I heard the tourists coming in my dreams
I couldn't sleep, I saw a big bear
The biggest wind blew the blue curtain into the bed
It was hot as milk, has the milk now shrunk
We've left 22 men on Elephant Island
Slept only three hours in nine days
I am the leader, at least I can read
While the heat subsides:
This veil belonged to the Empress who paid no bills
"Her love of airiness and simplicity in the use of Indian mull, so resembling lace"
I appeal to the cool and lacy milk
"Designs in fine linen lawn not light enough to satisfy her fancy"
This queen has a very fat neck

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"One is worked in roses, the other in flowers and leaves"
Her waist's pulled in, she's got a baby too
"When everything Eyptian was the fashion"
Now the milk's down and the wind's up
"This queen surrounded by her family"
Stirring the honey locust tree
"And decrees of fashion from which there was no appeal"
I do touch each in order as I think
Some part knowing what poetry could be
No one's ever taken this book from the library
Since 1893, I swear
Moon's made it above the trees, milk's become custardlike in
the tank I hope, friends enjoy the wind like fried food,
I forgot, they'll be up soon, can this be exercise, is
it dry or wet in the air, I won't turn the lights on but
you do if you like, we're in the Antarctic now, your bright
shirt against the white even more gorgeous than before,
I don't feel it yet, I'm thinking about the order of
these ideas, I forgot to think in the library, empty
where I could yell for you if I needed to without disturbing
a reader, carpets on floors, the big globe, books on the
missing link, nothing on social security in this whole
library, this is the missing idea, money, and my look in
the library, between the daytime and night I'm getting
older, a big guy like a hairsplitter or grasshopper
has come now into my room, he's feeling his way upward
with five legs and two antennae, a long tail like a fat neck
in back, the tree's still moving, this moment still tentative,
capitalism and materialism still here, a book about an old
man, a young man still at the south pole, a loud noise
signifying death to me, a paper out the window into the
wind,
he's gotten further up the wall, head first like me, now
fallen down suddenly on all five feet, I've got the five
aces again and I don't know how to show them, a big
gregarious
grasshopper head, starting up the same wall over again, he
has no way of perching or being secure, but five legs give
you dignity, no, there are six!

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I know now the problem was I had looked incorrectly, that
chapter ends as pudding then, now why this wind, I forget
the
moment where I please and do everything right and be clear,
he fell again and every time he falls he comes closer over
here,
there's dual purpose in the dictionary, I get informed and
divinely then where everything Egyptian is the fashion, old
Egyptian and old Persian, old Persian milk is perishing,
he's
on my box of letters now, far-fetched and full and fucking,
that's the moon and its monkey deriving more stores of
adjectives,
maybe you've found the best rest in old ideas, he can fly too,
nothing much to that moment with the unused books in the
empty
room, so warm though, now a frenetic one's come to slow
the
tune, cooling down, I don't rest as much as I have a purpose
when I'm in here, these guys don't, they're out of their
element as one would say or buzz, some other man in town
is
writing his autobiography, he talks to a woman about it, I'll
see my sister soon, right here, and now they're biting me,
can I be nimble enough to skip over moments and feel
enclosed
in a kind of heat, heat before scalding, no damage done,
where I'll rest in old ideas, save part of the old culture
and still be a hero every minute, I consult myself and
forgive it.

I fall too under the shower of water
Old and new but never another

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Charles Haseloff

SONNET 8.II., after RILKE

Few childhood friends are left
in the city's random gardens, where we met
and shyly took a liking to each other, speaking,
like the lamb in pictures bearing the talking scroll,

in silence. We lived so many joys. And no one cared
about owning them. Who could have? They all dissolved
in the way of sidewalk multitudes
and with the passing of each anxious year.

Cars surrounded us, mysteriously driven.
Houses loomed tall but unreal—none ever knew us.
Nothing existed for us in this world except

our games. Our balls. Their glorious curves.
Not even children. But sometimes, alas, one,
one ephemeral one, would be struck by a flying ball.

In Memoriam: Egon von Rilke

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Ethel Gofen

I AM REMINDED OF THE REDSKIN

I am reminded of the Redskin who crawled on his knees all the way to Mecca. His instincts were sound, but his sense of direction was faulty.

My uncle lay dying in the hospital. We brought him a transistor radio. The batteries lasted eight days and eight nights, as everyone fled the floor complaining about the noise.

Woody Allen has spoken profoundly about death in one-liners. I prefer two-liners. I say the first line; God says the second.

No one who has not visited the Underworld can consider himself well-traveled.

Karen Quinlan sleeps on, while earnest doctors track the sources of the brain. They have it easy. They don't have to contend with Pigmies, dysentery, malaria, mad tribal leaders, rapacious Arab slave traders. They are still missing the essential connection.

Fierce bees coming north from Brazil claim to be the sting of death but are merely false prophets.

Terminally ill people fascinate me, challenging us to do a wholesome deed in a dark world. I would like to give a good old fuck or at least a glass of water, and in certain cases Perrier, to every dying man, woman, and child. Terminally ill people are coming out of the closet.

Moral dilemma: what to do with the perverts lining up to screw Karen Quinlan?

I am angry with my father for going gentle into that good night but, more than that, because he never calls or writes.

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The Redskin believed he could be bitten by a poisonous snake and dance through death to life again.

The dust from beautiful bodies weighs the same as the dust from plain folks. I prefer the beauties, but grace makes no such distinctions. It comes invisible into the sources of the brain and swells there. Soon the fading body is enveloped in iridescent brilliant light, a beacon, a signal to my father that his brother may be changing permanently into something else. Soon his brother, my uncle, may no longer be deaf in one ear.

Andrew Rosenheim

BLUE IS NOT YOUR DYING

Blue is not your dying
in an old country store,
nor certain in the faint
of yellow field, autumn
and behind you. Wretched
as the fact of death,
fixed to an old cane chair,
thus, thus, sing some birds
across the line of road
our listening bent to.
You are not to speak; some-
where is not else's way
of choosing, closed to bids,
closed to auction, to call.

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Gilbert Sorrentino

CROOL TIME

I ask dim questions of California friends.
That foreign sun in which the madmen grow.
O Jesus the streaked and dirty panes.
Can it be sixteen years? Where and how?
Bald heads ring the golden bay.
That green water and the mindless young.

The sleet angled with enormous cruelty.
Trembling hands touch the hotel windowsill.
The green that kills the heart in winter.
Drunk a sailor meets his drunken father.
Anything more than cheap wine by the jug?
Hey kid you look kind of familiar!

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Cecil Brown

INTERVIEW WITH TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

The street Tennessee lives on in Key West—Duncan—is as narrow as an alley. When the cab finally clumped to a stop in front of a white conch house with a picket fence, the cabdriver said, "So, this is where Tennessee Williams lives? Most people on the Island like him, but I don't." The reporter asked why not. The cab driver answered that he didn't know, he just didn't.

The gate needed a hinge so it dragged an arc like windshield wipers make on a foggy morning. The playwright opened the door in his bedroom slippers, his lips parting with a broad smile. Tennessee's face is very impressive, aged with deep corrugations and a brilliant smile that exfoliates and spreads over the entire face like a laughing flower. His voice is sonorous, with a protracted southern accent. "Well, you know," he said as he led the way into the living room, "I don't know if I have anything to say, hahaha!"

On the Dick Cavett show some months back he displayed his New Orleans home to the public. New Orleans is his front room, but the Florida Keys is where he works. Beside the typewriter in his study was a copy of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, a fan which once belonged to Hart Crane, and a picture of D.H. Lawrence hung on the wall.

Int.: You have a new play coming out? *Red Devil Battery Sign*?

Williams: Yes. The casting is not complete. And the financial backing is not secure. I don't usually write expensive plays. It cost about thirty thousand dollars to revive *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, for example. This new play will cost three hundred and fifty thousand. I hope to have the casting and production deal closed by the middle of February. If they don't have the production deal ready by then, I'm going to publish the play as I have written it, and then I'm going to leave a codicil in my will that it cannot be changed. Because when you die, they do that sometimes. They try to rewrite your work.

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Int.: What else was happening in New York? See any movies?

Williams: Saw *Chinatown.*

Int.: Did you like it?

Williams: Oh yes. There was an element in it I love very much. Corruptibility. I didn't like Fay Dunaway being shot like that in the end. I think Polanski is hung up on blood. There are very few sensational crimes committed in America for which the true culprits have been found. Very few. I'm not sure Charles Manson is the real culprit. I wasn't sure when I was watching *In Cold Blood* last night that those two boys were the real killers. I'm not certain that Truman (Capote) believes it either. I don't trust the law. I think they are more interested in looking good in the public's eye by catching just *somebody.*

Int.: But Manson admitted he did it, didn't he?

Williams: Oh, well, he wasn't even there. He was accused of controlling these people by ocular power—that's ridiculous. Even Sirhan Sirhan and Oswald are not, I don't think, the real culprits. The law has an image of itself as an efficient prosecutor. I think there is something back of "that," and something back of "that" and something back of "*that.*"

Int.: Aren't you paranoid?

Williams: Perhaps, but I think we should be skeptical. We are living in some terrible times. Do you remember Dorothy Kilgallen? She was the only person that interviewed Jack Ruby and before she printed that interview she died very mysteriously. Now, they say she died of an overdose of pills and liquor. I've met her on several occasions and I never noticed any signs of inebriation and I know these signs very well. Look at Martha Mitchell. Hahaha! Martha wants to be a lady! (He roars with laughter now.) Anyway, she claims that Governor Wallace told her that Nixon was involved in the assassination of Kennedy. Well, nobody has heard of Martha Mitchell since. (He chuckles). Yes, baby, we live in some frightening times. But you're too young to get scared, and I'm too old.

Int.: Were you frightened when you were thirty?

Williams: When I was thirty I was very frightened. But conspiracies have been going on since the beginning of time. Big money is behind it.

Int.: The character of Chance Wayne which Paul Newman played in *Sweet Bird of Youth*—was that based on somebody you knew?

Williams: I imagined it. It was a character who spoke for something in all of us. Chance Wayne was very impressed by success, but you

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know, hahaha! It doesn't take that much imagination to discover that kind of character.

Int.: How did you get along with Paul Newman?

Williams: I never had a real conversation with Newman. He just didn't like me. I'd go to his dressing room and say hello. We just never got to know each other, I guess. I do think that he is a liberal—whatever that means. He supports the right causes, but I don't think he'd lay his life on the line for a cause. He's not like Marlon Brando, who is inscrutable. Although I hardly know him as well as Newman, I felt there was a deep person behind him, an inscrutable person.

Int.: Newman seems to be gifted with youth, like Dorian Grey.

Williams: Oh, he's much tougher than Dorian Grey, who was a romantic figure out of old soft-headed Oscar Wilde's imagination. Wilde was a great wit but a sentimentalist. I have a great definition of sentimentalist! A sentimentalist is somebody who will not cross the English Channel to avoid going to Reading Jail. Shit, you don't learn anything in jail! There is nothing I want to learn in jail!

Int.: Don't you think "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" was worth it? Or "De Profundis"?

Williams: No! Any fool would have crossed the Channel! But the Irish are a strange lot, aren't they? You just can't win against those establishment people. Wilde should have known that. He didn't have a chance! Not on those grounds (he roars with savage laughter). Wilde was the biggest fool of his time! He was a wit and a fool at once, and it was this paradox that made him an important figure. But his letters are his greatest work, his masterpiece, just as D.H. Lawrence's letters are his best work. Lawrence had a very intense view of life. Sometimes this intensity can keep you from the emotion itself, keep you from inside of the feeling, you know. Sometimes when I feel very intense about somebody it makes me impotent, I get terrified.

Int.: Is sex a big part of your life now?

Williams: Occasionally I want sex, but it's not an obsession the way it used to be. Fortunately, I've passed the time—hahaha!—in my life when I concerned myself too much with those matters! I occasionally want sex but I don't let it bother me. I find it useful in my work.

Int.: You put it in your work?

Williams: Yes, I don't need all that activity anymore.

Int.: How did you come to write a play about D.H. Lawrence?

Williams: I went to Taos, New Mexico in 1939 to meet all the people who knew him. His wife, Frieda, especially made a deep impression on me. I started writing the end of a long play about Lawrence. The

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short play *I Rise in Flame Cried the Phoenix* is the end of a much longer play I had in mind, but when I got to New York my agent said, "Nobody is interested in Lawrence! Don't waste your time on that." So, I dropped it, which was a shame because I could have made a wonderful play out of D.H. Lawrence's life. So, I wrote instead, *Battle of Angels* which was my first professional failure.

Int.: Why was it a failure?

Williams: They closed it almost as soon as they opened it. I think I once described it as a play with intense religiosity and hysterical sexuality coexisting in one person. The audience didn't like it, the critics said it was dirty, and at least one official said that I should have been run out of town for having written it.

Int.: What was the outcome of all this?

Williams: I was given a hundred dollars and told to go somewhere and rewrite it. I came here to Key West. That was in 1941.

Int.: Was D.H. Lawrence an ass-man?

Williams: I don't think he was physically well enough, do you? But I don't think, like some of his biographers, that he was impotent.

Int.: You have a brother. What's he like?

Williams: My brother is a nut. He's running for senator—*again!* Hahaha! He won't run for the House of Representatives, that's not good enough for him. Only the Senate will do. He advertises himself—hahaha!—as "Tennessee Williams's brother!"

Int.: What is his political status now?

Williams: Oh, he's still a lawyer. He converted me to Catholicism, but then turned right around and had me put in a loony bin!

Int.: When was that?

Williams: I was in it for about three months in 1969 around Christmas time. My brother *put* me away. I couldn't write anything there. They wouldn't give me anything to write with. They even took away my glasses. The doctor Max Jenkins gave me some speed, but it wasn't entirely his fault. You were supposed to give up drinking, but I wouldn't give up drinking. When I got out it was all right except that I'd had a coronary and three convulsions in one day. I was somewhat damaged, hahaha! (He laughs convulsively.) After I got out I wrote many things. It didn't stop me from writing. I rewrote *Out Cry* around 1970, around that time, after my deep depression.

Int.: What's your opinion about that play now? It was not very well received. *The New York Times* was bothered by the lack of humor and the hermaphroditic nature of the two characters, feeling that this two-character play was actually a one-character boring monologue.

Williams: I think it's my best play since *Street Car Named Desire.* But

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they (critics) don't understand it, but they will one day.

Int.: What does it have that your other plays do not? What's so great about it?

Williams: It's a very personal play. It's my own human outcry. The style is different too.

Int.: Was it the change in your writing style that caused the deep depression?

Williams: This depression had to do with a sudden reversal in my writing, yes, and also perhaps more particularly with the death of the person I had lived with for fourteen years, Frank Merlo. Almost immediately after his death, the depression came on. There's a brief period of shock in which you feel almost nothing.

Int.: Frank Merlo probably had more influence on your life than any other person—outside of your family?

Williams: Frank had a great influence on my life as an artist. After his death there was a drastic change in my style of writing.

Int.: What was Frank like?

Williams: Frank was a very beautiful person. When he died of lung cancer, he was very young. He was operated on nine months before he died. When he had x-rays they discovered this cancer and operated on it at Memorial Hospital, but they couldn't remove it because it was too close to his heart. They called me and said that he had six months to live. Nobody told him. How could you tell him? (He pauses. There is great sadness in his voice as he continues as if mesmerized by the story itself.) He didn't know until he could hardly breathe and began bringing up blood. By that time he must have known. He must have known that I knew. But he never said anything. I visited him every day. That's what made me so mad about the *Atlantic* piece because they said that I was so terrified of death that I wouldn't visit my best friend when he was dying. I was with him every day. I mean it wasn't easy. He was very brave, though. It didn't frighten me as much as it numbed me. The shock—then I realized all of a sudden that I was lost. I didn't know how to handle my life then.

Int.: Did he in any way anticipate the shock that was going to come to you?

Williams: Probably. In retrospect, I think that Frank should have been told, for I think that people can make an adjustment, not a happy adjustment, but they can make some kind of psychological adjustment. So that when the terminal, the really terminal state comes, it's not so horrible. You usually have several good months, you know,

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reasonably good months between the diagnosis and the time you become really sick. He died in Memorial Hospital in New York, which I don't recommend. They weren't kind. They've become very callous, you know, they've seen so much death. He was a very healthy man but he smoked four packs of cigarettes a day. He was almost a chain smoker. I was with him the last day. He went to sleep so I left the room. A few hours later I was told that he died. I think that he realized he was going to die that night. When I came to his hospital room he pointed to these little paper cups full of blood. Just pointed to them. He could talk, but he didn't say anything, just silently pointed to them.

Int.: After Frank's death, you went to the loony bin, and after the loony bin you came out with a confirmed new style of writing.

Williams: Yes.

Int.: Are you fascinated by madness?

Williams: Somewhat fascinated. I saw *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and I thought it was appallingly bad. It had absolutely no pertinence to the subject matter.

Int.: Madness and comedy—do you associate these two?

Williams: Real madness is very terrible. It's hard to treat with humor.

Int.: But you were never afraid of going mad yourself?

Williams: The tragic condition is terrible. I think that most of us are a little mad. After all, we have to try to make an entity out of all our predecessors, all the fragments of previous being that went into our beings—to make a composite unit out of it. It's almost impossible. We are bound to be somewhat divided and split. I think all of us are. Who knows, (speaking almost to himself) who knows what it takes to make a civilized self.

Int.: What was your father like?

Williams: My father was a man who would not express his feelings freely, you know. I'm sure he had feelings. He'd gone up to see *The Glass Menagerie* in Chicago; he was deeply impressed that it was sold out! They had to put a chair up in the aisle, a folding chair. He was very impressed. My pa and I never had an articulated relationship. We used to drive into work every day from the suburbs, all the way down close to the waterfront in St. Louis. I used to try to think of something to say to him. I would compose about three sentences in my mind, hahaha! But he didn't go to that much trouble. I could hardly bring out the three sentences. I would say something like "the smog is heavy today," or "the traffic is bad," you know, and to each one he would grunt in some disparaging way: "What's this son-of-a-

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bitch trying to talk to me for." In retrospect I don't think he was that bad. I think he wanted to talk too. But we were just so tongue tied with each other.

Int.: Did he have any idea who you were going to be? Did he encourage you or did he think it peculiar that you persisted in writing poems?

Williams: He didn't discourage me, and he didn't encourage me. His sister was my greatest proponent as a poet because on the Williams side we are related to Sydney Lanier, the Civil War poet who wrote "Song of Chattanooga" and "Marshes of Lent"—that's his best work. Yes, his sister was impressed by my writing poetry. But my father, he only liked two things of mine, *Baby Doll* and a short poem called "Kitchen Door Blues." (Tennessee throws his head back and recites the poem in a very beautiful, deep resonant voice):

> My old lady died of a common cold.
> She smoked cigars and was 90 years old.
> She was thin as a paper with the ribs of a kite,
> and she blew out the kitchen door one night.
> Now, I'm no younger'n the old lady was
> When she lost gravitation and I smoke cigars
> I get sort of peaked an' I look kinda pore,
> So for God's sake, lock that kitchen door!

Hahaha. He used to read that out loud, he liked that.

Int.: And he liked *Baby Doll?*

Williams: Oh yes, he defended *Baby Doll.* In the last picture I have of him, taken by some Knoxville Newspaper, he is standing under the marquee of the movie house, pointing at the title of the picture "Baby Doll" and the caption was "I don't see anything wrong with this picture." hahahaha!

Int.: That was as far as he got? Huh? (laughter)

Williams: Who knows, he was not one who would say. I think he loved me. I was named for his father, you know. He didn't like the fact that I was a sissy. He used to call me Miss Nancy.

Int.: Were you a sissy?

Williams: I was! I didn't do the things he thought I should be doing. He thought in the summer I should get a job like other boys; he didn't understand why I was so shy. Well, my mother made me these things and I think he did too.

Int.: Was she protective of you?

Williams: She was totally protective and he was overly the opposite. He would come slamming drunk in the house and say, "Well, Tom, did you get a job today?" I would hear him all the way up on the avenue.

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I don't put my father down. Because if I had ever appealed to him for money I guess he would have given it to me.

Int.: Did he have money?

Williams: Adequate, adequate. He spent an awful lot on girls, hahaha, and liquor and poker.

Int.: Did you know that?

Williams: I knew it, yah, my mother knew it.

Int.: You were good in ROTC?

Williams: Yes. Well, I think I have a natural talent for shooting. I think it's my family heritage to shoot good, you know, because (hahahaha) the Williamses were all in the war—I would never go in the war, but I just naturally inherited a gift maybe for shooting, not that I ever exercised it. But . . . Clark Mills, he's one of the sweetest people I've ever known. We used to work together. He would work on poetry and I would work on plays in St. Louis in the basement of his home. . . .

Int.: You were nineteen or twenty then?

Williams: No, no. I was older than that. Let's see . . . how old was I? I was in the shoe business—my father took me out of college (University of Missouri) after three years because I flunked ROTC which he respected highly (hahaha) which I couldn't make.

Int.: Is that one of the reasons why he thought you were a sissy?

Williams: Yes, one of them. There had always been a great military tradition in the Williams family. He quit college to go into the Spanish-American War so it was a great shock to him that I couldn't pass ROTC. But I did learn to shoot good.

Int.: Your sister had one of the first prefrontal lobotomies in the country. Did the writing of *Glass Menagerie* help you to express some of your feeling toward your familial situation and your sister's condition?

Williams: Oh, yes. Especially toward my sister, but it's even expressed in a short story called "Portrait of a Girl in Glass."

> Not very long after that I lost my job at the warehouse. I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box. I left Saint Louis and took to moving around. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brighly colored but torn away from the branches. My nature changed. I grew to be firm and sufficient.
>
> In five years' time I had nearly forgotten home. I had to forget it, I couldn't carry it with me. But once in a while, usually in a strange town before I have found companions, the shell of deliberate hardness is broken through. A door comes softly and irresistibly open. I hear the tired old music my unknown father left in the place

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> he abandoned as faithlessly as I. I see the faint and sorrowful radiance of the glass, hundreds of little transparent pieces of it in very delicate colors. I hold my breath, for if my sister's face appears among them—the night is hers!

Williams: Is that the end of the story or the play?

Int.: End of the story.

Williams: My sister did ask a question—we were dressing a Christmas tree—it was the first time I realized that she was mentally off base. She said "do stars really have five points?" I didn't put that into the play, but I think it's in the short story. I'd have to read it over because it's so long since I've written it. I just remember my sister making that remark.

Int.: Was Nono in *Night of the Iguana* based on your grandfather?

Williams: "Nono" means grandfather in Italian. Yes. It was an affectionate portrait of my grandfather. Who, however, was not as mercenary as the old man in the play, who was always saying to his daughter, "what's the take, Hannah?" I thought he was a touching compliment to old age.

Int.: You seemed not only to have used art as a way of re-creating your own identity, as all great artists do, but to have re-created your family too, casting their limitations in a more sympathetic light.

Williams: Yes, I don't think I would have been the poet I am without that anguished familial situation. Therefore I don't think we should busy ourselves for the sufferings of our familial relationships because they do charge us, you know, with a certain dynamism; and if we're really creative people, we release it in our work. I've yet to meet a writer of consequence who did not have a difficult familial background if you explored it. Of course, a lot of people never turned out to be creative at all because they had terrible familial backgrounds; they just crack or break.

Int.: Let's talk about two friends of yours, "Coroydon" and Donald Windham.

Williams: When did you hear about "Coroydon?"

Int.: Is it true that you asked him to live with you and caused him to leave three million dollars?

Williams: He did live with me for a while.

Int.: What about the three millions and the Lady in England that you forced him to leave?

Williams: No, that's ridiculous. Where do you get these ridiculous stories?

Int.: You called him down and gave him a check for five thousand dollars and said, "I've changed my mind, please excuse me."

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Williams: That was during the sixties, but the truth of the matter is that this particular lady, who was in her eighties, she and her daughter had decided to dismiss him because of his drinking habit. But, you know, people make up all kinds of stories about me.

Int.: What about Donald Windham? Your long friendship with him is so impressive.

Williams: Donald Windham and I have much the same heritage, you know, I love that man, as a friend.

Int.: But you were never lovers?

Williams: Never, never. The first night I met him, he was the most beautiful boy I'd ever seen, and I was introduced to him by Harold Vinal, a poetry editor, one of the first people I met in New York. He brought me over to this apartment, this pad, on Fifty-Second Street, which was called "Swing Alley" or "Jazz Alley" or something in those days. He had a little walk-up, a cold water flat so we went over there and I was enchanted by Windham's appearance, by his face and we started dancing to the music from the place below and I kissed him and this Indian boy came up to me and said, "you'd better cool that" or something to that effect, "his lover doesn't like it." So it stopped right there. I've always been very scrupulous in those matters. I don't like to intrude in love relationships.

Int.: A Foul-Mouthed Gossip has it that you used your plays for a casting couch.

Williams: There is no truth to those rumors. I have always kept my professional work in the theater free of my love life. In the first place, I regard theater too seriously to compromise it with sex scenes. I am not very promiscuous. I am a sensual person, however; I think the artist has to be a sensual person. I certainly don't indulge in seduction with actors. My friendship with Donald became a very beautiful friendship that has endured, that could have endured indefinitely.

Int.: You saw that it would be better to leave the good things the good things?

Williams: Neither of us made any decisions; things just intruded. Our lives just drifted apart; I don't know if they will ever come back together again, but I regard things that were perfect once as remaining perfect always. Sometimes it would be a mistake to try to put it back together—you discover so many differences that didn't exist, but it's better to keep it preserved in the amber (hahaha), except he knows that I love him.

Int.: You were described by Donald Windham as being extremely diligent when you were young.

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Williams: Yes.

Int.: And at the end of the day you had worked very hard and then you would cruise and he said he cruised with you.

Williams: He did indeed. Our youth was rather proper, to the extent we could make it so. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Int.: He said that you were very handsone, very good-looking and you had a cataract in your walled eye which you corrected when you got money.

Williams: It didn't quite correct it; it's still walled and my eyes are still very sensitive.

Int.: Why do magazines create these stories about you? The sensational stories about your sex life? Do you play up that sort of thing?

Williams: Those stories are spurious. These interviewers ignore everything of a serious nature and just play up an event and exaggerate anything they can find that is of an embarassing nature. That isn't good. That's embarassing for my family; I have a family—I have a mother who reads—her eyesight is better than mine. My sister is exposed to reports of these stories even though she's a mental invalid. She's very alert and she gets these reports. My brother is trying to make it in politics, you know, these things are very harmful to him; they are embarassing to me. For instance, in New Orleans I got to use the athletic club; if too much shit gets around about me, I ain't gonna be welcomed there, you know. I notice the way I'm received at hotels, you know, and at restaurants, I can't afford to play up to that sort of thing.

Int.: But don't you use the principle of exaggeration in your work?

Williams: My work, yes. I can do that, I don't mind doing that.

Int.: Do you find it's poetic justice that an artist has to be hounded by inaccuracies as a result of his creative exaggeration?

Williams: I don't think he should be, no. I think that a lot of artists are not. In France, Genet is not and in America, Henry Miller is not. It seems to be an American form, an American thing to do that. There are a great number of eccentric people in England. And they're not put down as they are in America. People are more tolerant of eccentricity in England, where it is a tradition. If I had my preferred place to live it would be England, but they would have to push it down a little towards the South, you know?

Int.: In art you exaggerate in order to create emphasis.

Williams: I exaggerate because I don't like to write realistically; it doesn't interest me very much.

Int.: But you don't think the public has the same desire not to deal with things realistically or factually when they deal with you?

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Williams: Well they got to more or less because there are plenty of things that are eccentric about me: I'm wall-eyed, I'm this, that and the other.

Int.: Do you ever feel that your experience can never be ordinary? That whenever you have an ordinary experience, your great imaginative gift immediately turns it into something more fantastic?

Williams: I think I have a fairly clear conception of the world I live in.

Int.: Are you at all bitter about the way society treats its artists in America or the way society treats itself?

Williams: I don't waste time on that, it doesn't do me any good—that business doesn't help me, it only depresses me—little punks in this world. I hurt when I'm depressed. I am aware of it, yes, you know; I'm gonna do what I can to correct it—but what can I do, you know.

Int.: Did you think at any point in your life you encouraged rumors about yourself?

Williams: Oh sometimes you get the "Oh fuck it all" attitude. I knew an old lady who wore dentures and she was a lady poet, a rather eccentric sweet old thing, and she climbed up the hill to write her poems. The Muse didn't visit her, and she said "oh dash it all" and threw everything away. . . . She didn't realize that she threw her dentures away too ha, ha, ha! She went to a party several days later and somebody said tactfully, "why Louise, why I notice you've had some extractions lately." he he he! Poor thing had thrown her dentures away and hadn't realized it. He he he he! You can find anything in art that is equally fantastic. You see, art is compressed and there has to be exaggeration in art form to catch the outrageousness of reality, because art has less time in which to capture it, you see; you have a whole, you have a wide stretch of time for the outrageousness to exist in life. But in an art form, no, it has to be within a compressed space of time—of course, some people write realistic short stories and so they don't try to capture the outrageousness of reality. Sometimes the truth is more accessible when you ignore realism, because when you see things in a somewhat exaggerated form you capture more of the true essence of life. The exaggeration gets closer to the essence. This essence of life is really very grotesque and gothic. To get to it you've got to do what may strike some people as distortion.

Int.: What is the value in realistic short stories?

Williams: I've never discovered it except in the case of a few great writers, like Stephen Crane and Hemingway.

Int.: Even Hemingway had exaggeration.

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Williams: I think William Faulkner certainly did, like in "A Rose For Emily."

Int.: How would you describe your writing style?

Williams: I don't write in the stripped, bare style that one often encounters nowadays. I can write in a style that's so simple you wouldn't believe it. But that style doesn't suit me. Actually, I write in several different styles, but the ideal style is the conversational. I can't write without cadence. I have to hear the sound first.

Int.: Does your state of mind affect the plays as you write them?

Williams: Yes, it does, completely. I don't follow a conscious, intellectual framework when I write. I discover the play as I write it, and it usually takes a year and a half to two to finish it. These young kids today knock them out so fast! It's very enviable. I don't know how they do it.

Int.: Yes, but they don't knock out great ones.

Williams: I don't know about that. I never really know *when* I have a play. I just hope. It's maybe two years later I'll realize how good a play is.

Int.: How do you begin a play?

Williams: I begin it—you don't really want to know that, do you? hahaha! I don't want you to examine the methods of my work too closely because it will make my writing self-conscious; I just don't like to scrutinize them that closely.

Int.: So you allow yourself a lot of latitude in terms of what your play is going to be?

Williams: Oh, yes. Any little thing in mind of somebody, a word, something someone says or something—anything certainly, some German name, an innuendo, and I usually work in an exploratory draft and then I have a good idea of what I'm doing. Then I write a second draft and usually a third and sometimes I've written maybe six or seven. There is no such thing as a process of doing writing.

Int.: When you deal with symbols like that you're not aware of . . .

Williams: Of it being a process? I don't plan what I do, it happens. I read over each day's work then I become more conscious of what I'm doing with it, you know, what direction it should go in.

Int.: Are you ever conscious of what impact a play might have on the public?

Williams: Never at all. The public is so under-educable.

Int.: That includes critics?

Williams: Well, certainly critics. They can praise to high heavens an inferior work and make absolutely merciless ridicule of something much superior. So, how can you possibly predict which way they are

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going to jump. Sometimes it seems quite arbitrary. There are one or two who have a certain point of view to which they adhere, like Walter Kerr. I think he's the most brilliant in the sense of writing; he and Harold Clurman write the most brilliantly *written* criticism. They have certain biases and Mr. Kerr is convinced for some reason that I cannot write very well about male characters. He's right to this extent, that the feminine sensibility is more usable to me as a writer.

Int.: Why?

Williams: Just is.

Int.: Because the feminine sense is closer to the artist's sense?

Williams: I think it is closer to art, yes, but I think I have, especially in my play *Red Devil Battery Sign*, created a very very intense readable male character, that is equal in force to the female character. Brick (in *Cat*) is a very very delicately drawn character, he just didn't have as many lines but he was not a superficially drawn character. Stanley was pretty primitive and primordial in his instincts, but in many ways defensible. He was reacting with an animal's instinct to protect its own, its own terrain from invasion, by that element that he could not comprehend, which happened to be Blanche. Shannon was a more complete sympathetic male. Shannon was a very complex male, at least I think so.

Int.: Nothing expresses the essence of religious man better than the characterization of Shannon, the Episcopal minister, who knelt with one of his young, attractive female followers and found himself in the reclining position. Was it his despair that made Shannon so real to us?

Williams: He was torn between belief and disbelief, between sexuality and guilt. Yes, it's been sometime since *Iguana* and I don't recall all the details of Shannon. I just know he was a pretty well-drawn character.

Int.: When you say that the feminine sense is closer to the artistic principle does that have anything to do with your own sexuality?

Williams: I think the sensibility of the kind we're discussing can exist in a person totally celibate.

Int.: As in Hannah?

Williams: Yes. Well, you'll call me the Artful Dodger now. After you have written and published this piece we'll have a real conversation (hahahaha).

Int.: What are you hiding from?

Williams: Right now, man, this is Watergate. I'm not about to have any incriminating tapes (hahaha).

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Int.: I think you're doing fine, though, you know. Would you comment on the intellectual conflict between Jews and Blacks?

Williams: Stay clear of anything racist. I was talking to an Irish journalist in Chicago at the Chicago Athletic Club and they granted me the free use of the pool. I was there for *Out Cry*. So, I said, "Oh, you're Irish, aren't you?" I said, "Well, the Blacks and the Irish are my two favorite people," and it infuriated him because I put Black first. He gave me a bad write-up (hahaha). So, I've discovered now that one must think no race. I am crazy about the Blacks. And I must say I know people who ask, "Why don't you write about the Blacks?" I said because I would be presumptuous; you know, I don't know the Blacks that way.

I am terribly involved in the Black movement because I think it is the most horrible thing (racism). I think that the White people in America, southern and northern equally—even more northern—have exercised the most dreadful injustices, historically, and even now, discrimination, and not just in terms of jobs. No, that's not where it's at. No, and I wouldn't blame any Black man for looking at me and saying, "There's a red-neck honky," and that he hates me.

I can tell you, in my lifetime, I'm sixty-three, I have noticed a great improvement on both sides, but more on the side of Blacks. I think the Blacks, with great valiance, are fighting their way up and out. But, it's taking too fucking long, isn't it? I mean, after all, one wants it *now* and not in some remote future. It reached its most terrible crisis in the prison riot, don't you think?

Int.: You have many parallels between your life and Hart Crane's: dominant father who disliked poetry; an overprotective mother; tortured, gifted son-poet. . . .

Williams: Yes, I have a codicil in my will that when I die I am to be pushed off a ship where Crane went down. (He takes the fan off the wall) Hart Crane's mother sent me his fan.

Int.: Is Hart Crane one of the better American poets?

Williams: I think at least since Whitman and at his best I think he is better than Whitman. I don't know any American poet that is equal to him.

Int.: What about Emily Dickinson, did she have some of his qualities?

Williams: Oh, she was very constricted in form, don't you think? Obviously form. She's wonderful, but it's a pity that she was so constricted in form; there's no variety in it.

Int.: She didn't seem to be a self-conscious poet where it seemed that Hart Crane was dealing with some of the self-consciousness of his own life and maybe the life that was forced upon him.

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Williams: Oh, I think Emily Dickinson was a more private person. Hart Crane was the opposite of private; I think he splashed his life all over (hahaha), he spilled it like blood, but I don't think he had any choice.

Int.: What's the first thing that struck you about Hart Crane's life the first time you read him?

Williams: Oh, the beauty of the poetry, the intensity and the beauty of the torturer.

Int.: Did you find the diction difficult?

Williams: At first, yes. I had to read it repeatedly and then it became quite lucid to me, quite clear. I liked the broken rhythm, so unlike Emily Dickinson, you know, whose rhythm is da-da-da-da-da you know, poor thing—her thoughts, her imagination were so fabulous but there was such a monotony in her rhythms.

Int.: Crane had a jazz rhythm to him.

Williams: He did indeed. I loved the broken rhythm. I don't have that, I can't get that jazz rhythm, you know, in writing because I like cadence, but I don't like iambic pentameter. I was in my early twenties. The rhythm I always have you know, I can't escape from cadence because it's too ingrained in that. I can't write without cadence, I wish I could, because I know people writing right now they are not confined to cadenced speech, but I'm hooked on cadence. I have to hear the sound.

Int.: The other influences on your life: who are some of the other poets, who are some of the other people?

Williams: Poets, you know there are very few good poets. Elizabeth Bishop, I knew her in Key West, she's one of the greatest poets in America; Marianne Moore, she's a great poet. Yes, a great gallantry and humor. Of course, I don't find her comparable to Crane. No, a spinster likes to write about the intricate construction of a spider, you know, the spots on an antelope; you see, it can be beautiful, but he isn't like a man eviscerating himself beautifully, you know, like Crane—it doesn't hit me that way—of course to some people it does. I think Wallace Stevens is an excellent poet. You know, he was an executive in a Hartford, Connecticut insurance company. And how you can combine that with being a great poet I don't know, but he did. He was a great poet.

Int.: William Carlos Williams was also a doctor.

Williams: I understand that he was a great poet but I never could read his poetry with much empathy. I've read some of his plays you know, and I like them, but the poetry, never, maybe I haven't exposed myself to it sufficiently.

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Int.: Were you particularly fond of reading Shakespeare as a dramatist?

Williams: I began to read him when I was a child. My grandfather had all of Shakespeare's works and I read them all by the time I was ten, and my favorite was *Titus Andronicus* where the queen of the Goths eats two children; they're baked in a pie and she eats them. I liked that. So as a child of ten, I was interested in blood and guts Shakespeare. I don't think I was yet impressed by the great writings or poems.

Int.: Yes, that play is supposed to be his least mature work.

Williams: Some people say that he didn't even write it. It's ridiculous. Have you ever read the goddamn thing? It's the most ridiculous thing. Now, my friend Professor Oliver Evans saw that play and said it was a masterpiece, so I read it over again, well now, I could see it could be presented as a masterpiece, you know, if you are willing to accept all this Gothic horror, you know, but it seemed to me also the theater of the ridiculous.

Int.: And the theater of the absurd.

Williams: Yeah, on paper it seemed that way because of the Gothic elements in it; the boys raped Lavinia and cut her tongue out and cut off her hands so she could neither speak nor write the accusation against them. And the father kills Lavinia because she's been raped, after she witnessed the Queen of the Goths, Tamora, eating her sons baked in a pie; well it's one of the most ridiculous plays ever written.

Int.: The interesting thing about *Titus* is Aaron, the Moor who has a baby with the queen. Aaron takes the Black baby with him and he says, "This is my child and I will very probably die with this child." And the son of the queen runs in and says to him, "You have, villain, undone our mother!"

Williams: "You have undone our mother!"

Int.: And Aaron says, "I beg your pardon, I have done thy mother."

Williams: Oh no! That's Shakespeare—that humor is Shakespeare. That's pure Shakespeare!

Int.: And that comes to be, of course, the model for *Othello.*

Williams: Yeah, *Othello* is Shakespeare's greatest play, in my opinion, don't you think so? The dynamics of that play are so believable, so intense and the language is so beautiful—that and *Macbeth.* I prefer it to *Hamlet,* although the language of *Hamlet* is superb and the soliloquies are matchless, still I do not understand *Hamlet,* really. I think the closet scene, the scene between Hamlet and his mother, Gertrude, may be the greatest scene Shakespeare ever wrote, but still as a whole, I don't dig it—psychologically I can't groove on it. What happens at the end of all this dueling, and the poison and all that? It

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doesn't have the inevitability of, the purity of line as *Othello* has, or *Macbeth*. I really couldn't tell you what *Hamlet* is about. They say it's about indecision, the weakness of indecision, I've heard of that before, that's no explanation. Maybe I've never read it properly or seen it performed properly, maybe I'd get more out of it.

Int.: The feeling I get—

Williams: Is what?

Int.: Is that it's a self-conscious, intellectual play.

Williams: I don't think the "To be or not to be" speech in *Hamlet* is as great as the "tomorrow, tomorrow," speech from *Macbeth*. (Now Tennessee throws his head back and begins to recite the "Tomorrow" speech in the most resonant, musical, deep cello-voice.)

> Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage; and then is heard no more;
> It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.

That's a greater soliloquy than any in *Hamlet*, I think. And then to put out the light! Put out the light! Isn't that a great soliloquy? Has it ever been settled who Shakespeare was?

Int.: I tend to think that he was one person.

Williams: I think he was Shakespeare. I think it's all a lot of bullshit this question who he was.

Int.: They say he was not very conscious of his genius in his works and he seemed not to care about immortality.

Williams: I think he cared a great deal about keeping his company going, (hahaha), don't you? And writing the best he could for it; sure, that was the question.

Int.: He seems to have been very successful too, from all evidence.

Williams: Was he successful? I don't suppose he was.

Int.: Financially respectable.

Williams: I don't think he was, was he? I don't think he lived with great luxury.

Int.: He had enough money to buy a knighthood.

Williams: Did he buy a knighthood?

Int.: He bought one for his father.

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Williams: For his father, I didn't know that. When my grandfather took me to Europe we visited Stratford—I saw what was said to be his grave and various other reliquary things but I didn't hear he bought a knighthood for his father. What was the use of that, was the father living or what?

Int.: Yeah, apparently it was a matter of status.

Williams: Oh, how awful, but he was never called Sir William Shakespeare. Wasn't he sort of middle-class as most good writers are?

Int.: Bourgeoisie?

Williams: Bourgeoisie. Very few come out of the upper class, the so-called upper class.

Int.: The upper class always looks down on the creative arts because they change the status quo.

Williams: I don't know any upper-class writers. Except I knew the Sitwells. I guess you'd call them upper-class writers. They were said to be Plantagenets, hahaha! I'd say that's pretty upper class. I liked them, they were so upper class they were good! They were appealing, you know. I remember meeting them. Edith was weighted down with all these jewels. She did write well, but it was not my kind of thing.

Int.: What about Virginia Woolf and by the way, what do you think of James Joyce?

Williams: Virginia Woolf, I could never read her. I liked James Joyce. I loved *Ulysses*. I didn't like *Finnegans Wake*. I didn't like it where he went into a transmutation of words. Went on and on forever! I don't like to work over reading, do you? I just like to enjoy. I suppose I could try to read that again, but the only profit I felt when I first read it was the Anna Livia Plurabelle passage; wash women exchanging conversation while they washed clothes.

Int.: Don't you think that in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce used rhythm and cadence to untie meanings?

Williams: Oh, the Irish can't escape that cadence either, you know. Lord, how they do love it! William Butler Yeats was a great poet.

Int.: He would have loved your work because he finally discovered that conversational rhythm of yours only in his last poems and in that wonderful play, *Purgatory*.

Williams: I never read it.

Int.: It is beautiful, beautiful music.

Williams: Should I read it?

Int.: Yes, I think that's his best play.

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Williams: One of my favorite poems is "Sailing to Byzantium." Was that his early period or late period?

Int.: I'm not an authority but I think it was his middle period because he wrote several poems on that theme but he only perfected it in "Sailing to Byzantium."

Williams: I thought that was his greatest poem.

> An aged man is but a paltry thing,
> A tattered coat upon a stick.
> That is no country for old men, the young
> In one another's arms, birds in the trees:

That's really a beautiful poem. When I get drunk I love to read poetry.

Int.: The sound, the cadence of it—

Williams: Yes, lulls you—

Int.: Do you write much poetry now?

Williams: Not as much as I used to; I find it's just as easy to incorporate it into the plays.

Int.: I love your reading on that record of your narrative poem, "Yellow Bird."

Williams: Oh, that. Do you know I improvised a lot of that as I read it. Faye Dunaway's crazy about it, and every time I see her she plays it for me. She plays the record and says she's determined to make a movie of it. I don't like to read my plays. I like to see them performed well once in a while.

Int.: What does a good actor do when he performs?

Williams: That's what I'm trying to find: I'm looking for a good actor. I can't get Marlon Brando.

Int.: You have a part for him?

Williams: Yes. There are other good actors. There are plenty of them. But I've got to find one that's right by January or February 'cause after that I'm going to write a codicil to my will again. It cannot be changed.

Int.: The play cannot be changed?

Williams: Yeah, because if I should die, they'd do that; they'd get somebody to rewrite it, and it means too much to me. I'm waiting only to the middle of February and if they haven't found the right actor by then it's going to be sealed.

Int.: You're writing a new play now?

Williams: Oh, I'm just writing little plays now, plays that involve dancing, mime and dancing.

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Int.: It seemed to be more poetical, less conflicted than *Cat* and *Streetcar.*

Williams: You know, I got tired of long plays; I don't want to sit three hours and listen to these long, long plays. I know that I can say what I have to say in an hour or fifteen minutes.

Int.: Do you still read the Greeks?

Williams: I used to read the Greeks when I was young, but I can't read them anymore. One can't write a tragedy today without putting humor into it. There has to be humor in it now; it's so hard for people to take tragedy seriously because people are so wary now. I have seen few tragedies that were successful without humor in them.

Int.: What about this new play?

Williams: Red Devil Battery Sign? It's the best thing I've written in a long time. It's a tragic love story with a great deal of music. It takes place in Dallas, Texas and the hero is the leader of a band of Mariachis. They sing between each scene and sometimes during the scenes and dancing too—it's an expensive thing to put on.

Int.: Are you getting into a new form?

Williams: Yes, a new form. I think my new plays reflect new attitudes. I hope they do.

Int.: What are some of the new attitudes you think might be reflected in your new plays?

Williams: You got me! hahaha! I remain a romanticist and a sensualist and a lover of God and a believer. What else good can I say about myself (hahaha) I got a lot of bad things in me; I ain't about to tell you, though.

Int.: Got a lot of bad things in you?

Williams: In me, but they are even there in my work, you know. I don't want to talk about it.

Int.: What is the basis for a metaphor of cannibalism in *The Desire and the Black Masseur,* and *Suddenly Last Summer*?

Williams: Man devours man in a metaphorical sense. He feeds upon his fellow creatures, without the excuse of animals. Animals actually do it for survival, out of hunger. Man, however, is doing it out of, I think, a religious capacity. I use that metaphor to express my repulsion with this characteristic of man, the way people use each other without confidence.

Int.: The violent images you found in *Titus Andronicus,* when you were reading it as a kid, did you ever imagine you would create images like that, like the image of a man being eaten by boys in *Suddenly Last Summer*?

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Williams: I don't think it's as awful as that thing in *Titus Andronicus,* do you?

Int.: I think it's more civilized.

Williams: It's more metaphorical, isn't it. It horrified me, the film; Sam Spiegel made the mistake of inviting me to a private screening of it in his apartment and I walked out in the middle of it. I was so offended by the literal approach because the play was metaphorical; it was a sort of poem, I thought—I loved Katharine Hepburn in it but I didn't like the film, to be honest. The American Film Theater should have done *Suddenly Last Summer.* Then they would have caught it with Ann Meacham, Robert Lansing, Hortense Albert. It would have been beautiful. It was a play that should not have been made into a film at that period.

Int.: How did you sell the rights?

Williams: I sold them over the phone myself. Sam Spiegel, he called me up and he said "I'll give you $50,000 and 20% of the profits." I thought that was a good deal so I said okay. We didn't go through any agent that time. And do you know he paid me all those profits as far as I can tell. As far as I know he was perfectly honest with me.

Int.: What did the terms of the profits come to?

Williams: Don't know, it was quite a bit.

Int.: Do you still get residuals from those films?

Williams: Occasionally.

Int.: The *Cat* opened again on Broadway and it's doing very well. What changes have they made in it?

Williams: I made some changes in the end, not as much as I anticipated.

Int.: I heard Elizabeth Ashley is very good in it. Is she as good as Elizabeth Taylor?

Williams: She is brilliant in it. Liz Taylor is no actress. She was a personality. She was better than usual because she looked so beautiful; she was directed by Richard Brooks who's a wonderful director except that at the end he cheats on the material, sweetens it up and makes it all hunky-dory. Even in *Streetcar* they softened up the end a little bit; they made Stella decide never to sleep with Stanley again which is a total contradiction to the meaning of the play; he does, the meaning of the play is that he does go on with her. And Richard Brooks wrote a fabulous screen play of *Sweet Bird of Youth* but he did the same fucking thing. He had a happy end to it. He had Heavenly and Chance go on together, which is a contradiction to the meaning of the play.

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Int.: Did you ever intend to write any more screen plays?

Williams: Those experiences had discouraged me from the whole thing. I felt that if one didn't have control the work would ultimately, inevitably lose its truth.

Int.: Film is not one of your favorite forms as a writer?

Williams: I love to go to the movies now and I think they've improved vastly, but I would never write a screenplay again unless I knew I had real control over the script.

Int.: You're never interested in directing anything?

Williams: Oh, it's too complicated, too technical and too exhausting, no I couldn't do it.

Int.: Do you think the cinema industry and filmmakers will suffer from the lack of great talent such as yours in the cinema?

Williams: It seems to me that they've got a lot of good talent around, you know. They seem to have talents particularly suited to cinema. The stage was always where I got my working model.

Int.: What was it that made you so successful as a writer for the stage?

Williams: I think I have a curious combination of traits that are viable on the screen and on the stage. Joe DiMaggio came up in an elevator in a Chicago hotel: He said, "You're Mr. Williams, aren't you?" He said, "I want to congratulate you, you're selling the best thing in the world." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Sex." Hahaha! That's an over simplification, isn't it? Hahahaha. But, I liked it. That was a long time ago.

Int.: Because sex is closer to the truth?

Williams: Ya, I can see a lot of things by putting sex in it. I don't have trouble doing it, putting sex in it; I like it, you know. It seems very beautiful to me to write sex into plays.

Int.: What are some of your other qualities?

Williams: I have a sense of drama, a seventh sense, I think I do. I like dramatic confrontation.

Int.: To express ideas or to express feelings?

Williams: Feelings, mostly. I've been reading the diary of Vlasilov Nijinsky, the early diary in St. Moritz when he was going mad. He keeps saying "I am a man of feeling, my wife thinks!" (laughter). I think people with a slight tendency toward madness are more inclined to feel, you know. And, I think a tendency toward it, not total madness, but a tendency toward it, is very adaptable to the stage. Strindberg found that out.

Int.: He wasn't mad, but slightly mad?

Williams: Yes, because you know you get like that, you really hit out

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and the audience likes it. They like the madness in you hitting out. It is the most beautiful thing that Vlasilov Nijinsky wrote; he said a lot of profoundly true things, of course, some of them were mad too.

Int.: Is Blanche mad or does she just give in to the situation of her being mad?

Williams: I think she's broken at the end.

Int.: Which is not the same thing?

Williams: She had personal, great strength and personal vulnerability that was finally broken.

Int.: The madness becomes a metaphor to express that.

Williams: Yes.

Int.: To be taken away.

Williams: Yes. I think it was the only solution for her to go away, to be taken away or to go away. She was not adaptable to the circumstances as they were, that the world had imposed on her. She was a sacrificial victim, you know; she was metaphorical as a sacrificial victim of society.

Int.: There's great wit in her, too.

Williams: Oh quite funny, she's funny.

Int.: She fights with incredible stamina.

Williams: Yes, she fights to the end. She's a tiger, extreme tigers are destroyed, not defeated.

Int.: She had some of the nature of a great poet too.

Williams: Not a great poet; she had had some good speeches but she was eloquent in the way that maybe southern ladies are, you know. I always thought she had her comic side, her little vanities, and her little white lies, but when it came down to the nitty-gritty she wasn't a liar. She told the truth when she had to. But, she was broken on the rock of the world; I find her a sympathetic character, but I also find Stanley sympathetic. (laughter)

Int.: Yes, that made a great drama because there was a great conflict there.

Williams: You have to understand both sides.

Int.: In these new plays do you still try to strike at the audience, do you still try to shock them?

Williams: I don't think I'm the tiger I used to be. Hahaha. I'm trying to deal with them differently.

Int.: I'm very curious about these new short stories too because the *Eight Women* is the expression of the femininity.

Williams: Several sides of one, yes. Oh, I should think women are getting very funny and touching don't you?

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Int.: What is it that makes them so attractive?

Williams: I don't find men funny; they don't amuse me much. Why is that? I don't understand why!

Int.: Maybe because we're men.

Williams: They just don't make me laugh, they just don't amuse me as much. Women are closer to life really, they're more naked, more like naked life.

Int.: You mean they are not afraid? as men are?

Williams: They are closer to life, it seems to me. I may be mistaken, it seems to me that men bury themselves in businesses and moneymaking, competition and that sort of thing; women seem to me organically closer to love which is where life is, where it began, where it is.

Int.: You're not pessimistic about death are you?

Williams: Baby, I'm not scared of death, I don't think so. I have that normal, you know, apprehension, but I'm accustomed to the fact that my heart skips beats, especially when I drop my Nembutal at night. I know in about 10 minutes it's gonna stop palpitating. But, it don't alarm me like it used to. There's been a lot of talk about me having cancer—I ain't got cancer! Because I have taken every possible test. And if doctors want you to know you have cancer, they'll tell you; and I've got a doctor in New York who's older than me and I've pounded my fist on the table and I said, "I know I must have cancer!" and he said, "Mr. Williams, you are making me angry, I can't say you've got cancer, you've abused your liver, yes, but you haven't got cancer."

Int.: Did you go to China once to an acupuncturist?

Williams: No, I went to Bangkok because I had a swelling under my left tit here.

Int.: You thought you had breast cancer?

Williams: Yes, and this cardiologist in New Orleans, I came back from Europe and on the trip back by boat, I discovered this little swelling here, and he said, "Well, breast cancer is very unusual in men" and he said, "but, rare, unusual things can happen." I said "Well, you don't have to tell me *that*!" He said, "I would advise you to postpone this trip to the Orient and have an immediate operation on this swelling." I was with Professor Evans and he said, "Oh, it's not necessary at all, I know the King's surgeon in Thailand." He wanted to get back there, and he said, "He can certainly perform an operation on Mr. Williams if it is really necessary," so we went there. Well he knew a *military* surgeon who had never met any member of the royal family and he operated on my left breast. He operated

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under local anesthesia, I didn't even have a hospital room reserved, operated in a little clinic, and, well, he cut it out and I had what they called a genical masty, which is a swelling that men of my age get when they, you know, have abused their livers, and it stayed this way since 1970; it hasn't changed any. So, he said the pathological report was not malignant. I have a little scar tissue, that's all.

Int.: Are you a hypochondriac at all?

Williams: Oh yes, I've always been a hypochondriac; I wouldn't say it bothered me much.

Int.: Do you think about money much now?

Williams: No. I think I manage my money well. I own property in New Orleans and Coconut Grove. I could live on that. Insecurity is very bad when you are old. Like Maggie in *Cat* says, "You can be young without money, but you can't be old without it." hahaha! She says, "Either you got to be young, or older with money!" She's just telling it like it is!

Int.: Do you still have to go to backers for money for your plays?

Williams: Baby, you still have to go to them to get money. Still, there are some people who are patrons of the arts, people who care very deeply about theater. The Rockefellers gave me a few hundred dollars to get started. Of course, my big hits came along when you could still get movie sales—can't get them anymore. I am waiting for the big one, you know; to see if the backers will come up with the money for this production. The play has to be produced soon. When they know the conditions, they goddam better produce it hahaha! They all know it's money.

Int.: It's money for them?

Williams: They know it's money. I know it's something else; I don't need money. I got more money than time.

Int.: You used to say it the other way around.

Williams: Yah, I got more money than time and that don't mean I'm rich! But they're going to find out, they're going to find out.

Int.: (Seeing a picture of a young man leaning in a corner.) "Who is that?"

Williams: "Oh," "That's Frank Merlo—if only he had been an actor—he wasn't an actor but he could stand in a barroom and brawl!" Tennessee laughed.

That evening the reporter was introduced to the Lady Marie St. Just, a very attractive, elegant woman, a Russian by birth and English aristocrat by marriage. Out in the garden, the marble table

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was set for four. A candle flickered under the warm breath of the tropical breeze. Marie had cooked the veal and Tennessee made the turnips with his special sauce, a mixture of vinegar and tarragon. When we are all at the table, it's an album cover picture.

"I know this is not the subject of a polite conversation," Tennessee said, but I have heard that women can reproduce independently of men." "Oh, you mean, like chickens" The Lady exclaimed with complete credulity as she served Tennessee's plate, having carefully removed the dry chops. "I don't like the dry ones," he complained, "I can't eat the dry ones." "No, Tennessee, this is not a dry one," the Lady said. "Good." The playwright continued . . . "that women can still biologically, produce independently of men, but all the offspring will be female and that eventually the whole world would be women." Having completed this prologue which is a setup, a big soap bubble of fantasy, he leans back in his chair, his eyes wet with laughter. The Lady, fingering a Greek Cross, said, "But Tennessee, how is that possible?" "Somebody told me that," he laughed, "but I don't believe anything I hear anyway." I said, "Tennessee, who told you that? Sounds like the Foul Mouthed Gossiper." "What's that? Gossip?—Oh, yeah, yes! Gossip! Women's Lib, perhaps?" he chuckled.

His regular speaking voice is sophisticated, European, Southern, relaxed, conversational tone, brilliantly phrased—danceable. It's also his writing voice which he calls cadence. In this voice, sound and meaning are holding hands like lovers, all of his serious opinions are presented in this voice. On the second level chuckling indicates improbability. Finally, to indicate the folly of life, he throws his head back and roars.

"They had me address a Women's Lib Group—Women's Gay Lib Alternative, whatever *that* means! There are many Lib groups, you know, but this was a very rough group. A splinter group. They seduced me into coming by writing a very beautiful letter and I accepted. Bill Barnes, my agent, said, "I'd better go with you." So, we went. We were the only men admitted to this meeting, and they looked like they were all trying to appear as *truck-drivers* ("Sailors" I added encouragingly, Tennessee cracking up on cue) and I was *trapped* but Billie sat near the door—so he could get out, he he he! I told them that neither sex is completely one sex, that we all have vestigials of the other sex. Men have, you know, nipples, which are no longer any use to them. And so, with the female, who has vestigial counterparts of a male penis! What an awful uproar went up among

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these girls! I didn't think I'd get out of there alive! It was near riot!" He threw his head back and roared with laughter.

The most important event in Tennessee Williams' life was when he realized how his weaknesses were to be his strengths. A cruel father frustrated his hopes of romance with a girl whom he wanted to attend college with, but the strict father felt the girl would distract from his son's studies. So, Tom went to a different college. Then, the father took him out of that one in his third year to work in his shoe concern. Tennessee turned this into a strength: he disciplined himself, hammering on his typewriter after work into daybreak. Finally after two years of this he went back to college, this time to the University of Iowa, where he graduated at age twenty-seven. Then, he moved to the Latin Quarter of New Orleans, the Greenwich Village and Berkeley of its time, known affectionately as "sin city," a world far from what his father would ever admit to. Tennessee never returned to Mississippi or St. Louis to live, although he traveled everywhere else in the world, Taos, New Mexico, California, and New York when he was still poor, and Europe and Indonesia when he became rich. His choice of where he lives—New Orleans and Key West—are expressive of the folly and fantasy in the southern temperament, which he loves so well. His captivating charm is due to his having to make peace with two extremes of a man possessed by a very sensual nature and a memory of a guilt-ridden past hovered over by a cruel, inhibiting and ruthless father. He used art to remake his familial and personal shortcomings into one of the strongest personalities in America.

"Yevtushenko is a very charming man, but not very diplomatic," Tennessee said in his serious voice. "He saw my play *Small Crafts Warning* and we met for lunch the next day. He said to me, 'Tennessee, you have only put thirty percent of yourself into that play. I am not alone in this opinion. Everyone around me is saying the same thing.' I said to him—hahaha—isn't it fortunate that I have thirty percent *left*! hahaha!"

What about Solzhenitsyn?"

I have only read *Cancer Ward.* It lacks poetry, you know" he paused, "but I would like to translate Chekov some day." This evening's conversation took a serious turn as Tennessee got on the subject of contemporary playwriting and playwrights. "The whole of a play is exaggerated," he said, "But Harold Pinter has solved that in his last play. The one about two women and a man. Marie, what's the name of that play. We saw it together. It's Pinter's last play."

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"Have you met him?" I asked. "Yes, I met Pinter and he is a lovely man. We agreed that Jane Bowles is a great prose writer. Her novel, *Two Serious Ladies* is my favorite. I like "A Day in the Opening" as the best of her short stories. And she wrote a very beautiful play called *In a Summer House*. She died about a year ago and was about ten years younger than myself. But I like Pinter, he has a very elusive style. . ." "A very understated style, isn't it?" Marie said. "Pinter gets all his points by understatement; Tennessee gets his by overstatement. In Pinter you get very little but in Tennessee you get a lot. You know what I mean?" Marie explained to me.

In *Out Cry* the metaphor for the theater is the theater itself and therefore "the door and the wall," as Tallulah said, "are real, even though the play may not be." The players in *Out Cry* perform their "two character play" to a pretend audience. Thus, to the dialogue between the lyric and the realist theater, Tennessee adds a few lines: Plays don't have to be realistic for another reason; reality no longer enchants us with its pain. As Felice says, "Even pain has a limit." Reality can no longer pose a threat to a man because even pain has a limit. Reality can no longer pose a threat to a man because it is only one of the guises of *existence*. Imagination is just as valid to existence as is reality. Hence, Tennessee's new emphasis is now not on conflict, but mime and dance.

There are two images of Tennessee we should keep in mind, one as a poor starving young poet and the other one of a rich young poet. In the first, he is literally starving in some little town in Florida, the name's not important. Anyway, he finally lands a job as a teletype operator, but the guy working with him is a nut, just out of the asylum. Tennessee has the graveyard shift with the nut. The nut tells beautiful stories, and Tennessee is amused. He loves crazy people, then and now. He's had a lot of experience with it. Everything is going along fine until the boss warns him about his inefficiency. The employer practically gets on his knees, "Please, Williams, don't make me fire you in times like these when there just aren't any men around!" But one day, the lunatic and the poet botch a teletype message and the boss has to let the poet go, but retains the service of the lunatic. Tennessee beat it back to New York where he got a job in a hotel as a bell boy.

In the other image he is rich. He is the darling of the literary scene in New York, London, Rome, wherever he goes. At the end of an announcement of a new play by Tennessee Williams would usually be attached notes like this: "Tomorrow, after having read the

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notices, the author will be off for Italy, Spain, North Africa, Greece and Ceylon. He does not plan to return until next winter."

Between these two images, Tennessee has chosen the best from both worlds. He has been famous and wealthy a long time, but he has known poverty. Now his life is simple, almost without desire. His philosophy is epicurean: each man takes care of his own garden, leave God out of it. His consensus of life: "Self-pity is the worst emotion there is, next to deliberate unkindness."

After dinner Marie delighted us with a story about an Irishman, Pat, whose friend got his head cut off by the British. "And so, Pat had to go and identify his friend," she said, "and when the head of his friend was held up"—she lifted her arms high overhead—"'is this your friend,' the British asked him, holding the head up, 'No' says Pat, 'he wasn't that tall.'"

There was a silence. Time indeed seemed suspended. Tennessee looked very quiet in this last picture I have of him. Then he said, "Power is an embarassing thing to have. I never wanted power, except power over myself." Then he pushed himself back from the table, as if to take all of his life and his work into better perspective. "It's nice, you know, to have a simple life. I want to love and that can be it," he said, looking up at me, "You know what I mean?"

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Luis Harss

CAPITAL OF FEAR
(Buenos Aires, December, 1977)

It always hurts to go home. And this time more than ever. Buenos Aires still has a certain chic (the latest fashions, books, movies—where censorship permits), but in shabbier surroundings each year, as the rest of the world drifts nostalgically out of sight.

An equidistance from the centers of culture and politics used to give the Argentine an ecumenical view of the world. True, one was brought up on heroics (the "patriotic" Perón years, 1945-55), but also the worldlier illusion—dear to the Argentine heart—of having invented blood transfusions, the scalpel and the ballpoint pen (and also fingerprints and, alas for those who have suffered its refinements, the electric cattle prod).

A narrowing of perspectives, a shortening of horizons can be healthy, perhaps. "We have to live within our means," people say. The country has overspent itself for over fifty years (the "take-off point" was 1910). The industrial panacea of the forties has collapsed. (A truism: "Work-intensive" industries are as inflationary as unkept promises.) The bonanza of the postwar years was frittered away in profligate living. Worse, the middle class has educated itself out of the market. Skills, talents, professions, in a depressed economy, have nowhere to go but out (to the U.S., to oil-rich Venezuela). The result, morbidly welcome to some, is impoverishment, bitterness, violence. "In Argentina everyone is employed," but in the wrong job, or in several to make ends meet. So, too, "everyone has a roof," but—not counting slums, which can be "cleaned up"—cramped in with generations of squabbling relatives that share expenses and frustrations. A man, to be alone with himself, still stands at a street corner, smoking—our folk image of the immigrant—waiting for something to happen, as he did a hundred years ago. "We are chapters in someone else's history," a local prophet used to say. But before, somehow, it was mainstream history. Not the fake patriotic glories we were taught, but the sense of being in the world, even if only in one of its remote corners. Now, it turns out, we are (how to explain things otherwise?) part of the Third World, with its debts and grudges. Graft in high places, political bankruptcy, and

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economic chaos add up to a mood of collective suicide. A country young, as countries go, but old in its weariness and disenchantment. A will only to suffer, to go down "in a bloodbath" (in the hope of being reborn?). A sense of total warfare—"the world is against us"—in which terror, of the right and left, only blows up the bombs already there.

The terrorist, in a sense, is the child of indulgence. In Argentina, at a certain social level, you can still live well, provided you don't want to do anything worthwhile. The poor (suddenly including organized labor, which had been living off the fat of the land, as everyone else) will strike and may occasionally, if pushed to the wall, take up arms, but without the old Messianic fervor. The guerilla, we know, is a middle-class plague, a disease of mindless wealth with no outlet but guilt and the rage of lost hope. A new form of internationalism for decaying utopias. In some sense, a last hopeless link to the world, as we sink into "flag and family." Though of course its appeal is the opposite, part of the same common urge to turn back the clock to simpler times. The agrarian myth of more gracious ways, before rootless city life, at some point joins the Marxist millennium.

The first Peronist period (my childhood) was loud. Speeches, mobs, swaggering parades, burning churches. A lurid political doctrine, grand public works (airports, swimming pools, children's fairy tale cities, before Disneyland), self-congratulatory holidays with card-carrying demonstrators and their banners trucked in from the provinces. A bloated image of World Power: rumors of an atomic plant in the mountains, an Argentine Car (with imported motor), even a prototype jet plane (that never flew). All to the tune of ranting loudspeakers; eventually, in the shadow of closed borders, dimming lights. In the end, gloom, hate, isolation; clouded store windows; the blank noise of empty streets. Buenos Aires, "capital of fear," a poet called it. A country with its back to the world, the garbage of dead slogans blowing in the wind. Then, almost twenty years (of graft, turmoil, military coups) after the Fall (1955), the Return (1973). An old corpse with a new wife (dressed up to look like the old one); a night of death (hundreds killed in a shootout between different armed factions on the road to the airport). A sad truth: all by "popular mandate," a clean electoral sweep (over 50% of the vote) for the man who once fled through the mist in a Paraguayan gunboat. The slogan is "national reconciliation." The jails have been thrown open to let out crooks and partisans (no one knows the difference any more). The stage is set for a takeover (by whom?). Everyone is "using" everyone else. It was said Perón had bankrolled at least one guerilla group from exile in Spain, before "breaking" with it. By the time he died and his widow took over, a whole northern province had practically been "liberated" and

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was about to apply for U.N. membership. The High Minister of the regime: an astrologer with a church of his own and links to Libya. A new fat dream of power: oil wealth (somewhere in the continental shelf). An off-shore rig on its way from a distant port (the latest nationalist fantasy) sinks mysteriously at sea. Meantime Brazil and Paraguay—old rivals, sudden partners in the energy race—are damming the upper Paraná River (a vital waterway) which, in time, may run as dry as the Rio Grande in northern Mexico. The British are still in the Falkland Islands (a name officially banned). The Chileans, who used to covet Patagonia, are renewing their claims in the Beagle Canal, south of Tierra del Fuego (as the Uruguayans, relying on changing tides, once claimed various shifting sand banks in the River Plate). As the generals step in (1976), it's official: "state of seige." No loudspeakers this time: only a dull silence, fear, paranoid resentment and xenophobia (the Brazilian cruzeiro is suddenly hard currency against the crashing peso and the Blacks are coming on a shopping spree), another turning in and away from a hostile world.

Somehow it all sounds familiar. A three-man Junta, representing each branch of the armed forces digging in: "Here to stay," for the usual, magic, ten years. It started in the thirties: an élite of order, men of destiny, taking turns at the helm. (A faint hope: political ambition will start them rotating among themselves, as it always has, until they wear out.) A more or less indifferent population cynically looking on (from Sunday parks, as the troops march by). Gone (with the frivolous past) the moments of popular frenzy that traditionally accompanied the rise and fall of each new hero. Soldiers (like defrocked priests) no longer wear uniforms in public (medals are targets). The new image: the faceless technocrat (fighting political corruption, corporate greed). At around 500% annual inflation in the last Perón days, almost any promise of stability seems tempting. So an old catchword returns: "austerity"—of mind, body, soul. A neo-Spartan appeal to national fiber. In fact: a cutting back, closing out, turning off, covering up on a grand scale, managed from hidden back rooms. "Repression" is a key word that, strangely enough, far from being pejorative, retains its military glamour. It means nightly Freudian battles with "subversives" (murderers, kidnapers, blackmailers) who, under the mysterious power of some secret birthmark, have gone as far as blowing up their own relatives (at dinner or in bed). The Freudian ghosts, of course, are real (and armed to the teeth), but also monstrous closet skeletons turning on their own kind. A full time censor dreams them up (a confused demonology): Mao, Fidel, hippies, abortion, divorce (one remembers a divorce law was a major factor in bringing down the first Perón

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government). The "institutional process" (or conscious ability to cope with problems) having broken down, the fight goes on outside the "system." The known dead or imprisoned ("held at the disposal of the Executive") are less visible, and far fewer, than the terrifying numbers (now in the thousands) of shadowy "disappearances." The price of being "in control"—as paramilitary groups, "civilian" police and hit gangs of all stripes roam the streets snatching people from their cars, homes and jobs—is not knowing, not seeing. "The safest streets in the world," so far as common crime is concerned (what thief or rapist wants to be shot down as a terrorist?). A nightmarish lottery of life and death for the suspect or unwary. The official "line": the guilty change their names, skip the country, manage (one way or another) to get themselves so bloodied up as to be unrecognizable. Who can keep track of them all? "Excesses" on the part of the Forces of Order can happen, but then: "In wartime people get hurt." There was the case of the protesting mothers with their list of vanished children (of all ages: there are teenage guerilla girls), gathering daily in front of the Presidential Palace: the "mad mamas" they were called (and hauled off). Now and then a High Authority intervenes personally, for some acquaintance even he may never locate. "Petitions" come and go as in a Russian novel. An occasional showcase trial for political corruption (the previous First Lady is still under house arrest for embezzlement of public funds) proves there is still habeas corpus (if you can find it). Inquiries pressed too far end with a word to the wise: "Ask no more."

In the mid-sixties, before it caught on (as things will), there was public outrage (and official censure) over the miniskirt. Buenos Aires was then "the capital of the Americas." It could even afford (in small doses) pot and beards. But the Crusaders (our local Klan) were already waving their capes and banners at street corners. A small lunatic fringe, to be sure (with the haggard look of sexual abstinence), but the only one allowed to demonstrate publicly at the time. For them (and for others) President Frei (the Christian Democrat who preceded Allende) was "the Chilean Kerensky." Their chant and challenge to the sinful city: "Christ is King." Book burnings, private armies, witch hunts (from both ends of the political spectrum) were only a step away. I remember McNamara's visit (around that time) with his Malthusian message of birth control, which was considered not only an insult to national pride (already suffering from one of the lowest birth rates in the world) but imperialist genocide. The "international conspiracy" that had already begun to take shape included strange bedmates: Communists, multinational corporations, the World Bank. (More recently: Chilean exiles, gospel sects—the new Protestant Menace—and

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French nuns.) Against such enemies the end justifies the means: a holy war to save "Western values." Its dirty side: a private wound to be hidden like a shared secret or shame. The Free World, unaware of its new champion, misunderstands; even Big Brother (once known as "the Colossus of the North") has grown flabby; Carter is either a dupe or a Communist; South Africa (with which there is suddenly a strange rapport, perhaps the prelude to a new wave of immigrants, if things go sour there) a last civilized bastion; the Buenos Aires Herald, the only paper that speaks up (because of its harmless English-speaking audience or its connections abroad) has been "bought by the Jews."

Worst of all, perhaps, in the long run, the new belt- and spirit-tightening priorities implied in "living within our means." It seems, for instance, that there are whole areas of "nonessential" knowledge that can be blocked out. In the recent Perón days (it was the left then, playing with its toy: the university) men and subjects were banished at will. Working, teaching or studying abroad meant "selling out." Now there are "practical" considerations: "We can't afford everything." Why, for instance, in these times of hardship, would an Argentine want to study Sanskrit? Or marine biology? Or perhaps even political science? Why—in another vein—the luxury of small private businesses that could be consolidated in huge centralized monopolies? Why subsidize a dying book industry (once the largest in the Spanish speaking world) that can barely afford the paper it prints on (and which has lost its markets to Spain and Mexico)? Surely (a good point) there are too many (at least half a dozen, for a population of about twenty-two million) automobile manufacturers in Argentina. And perhaps also too many musicians? Or musical instruments? (Or instrument makers, whose art has been crippled by a ruinous tax on imported wood?) And why so much "foreign" music when an old law, dating back to the days when Perón held mass rallies in the opera house, requires radio stations to broadcast Argentine composers 75 percent of the time? And so it goes, who knows where or how far in its insidious attack on choice, variety, culture, experience—the arts, scientific research—life itself. The question, for a country that once lived in the world, is: how much can you leave out and still be alive? Or, to put it another way: how poor can you afford to be (in all these "nonessentials") without starving? The depressing answer, so far, seems to be: there is money for the right things, such as the millions currently being spent on airport renewal (not to mention the huge transmission towers and generators needed to beam color TV to the world in a country where the phones stopped working ten years ago) for the 1978 World Football Cup.

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BOOKS

SOLZHENITSYN'S LENIN

LENIN IN ZURICH. By Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Translated by H.T. Willetts. Farrar Straus and Giroux. $8.95.

Solzhenitsyn's *August, 1914* was the first of three volumes—or "knots," as the author calls them—of a trilogy designed to portray the fate of Russia from the outbreak of the first world war in 1914 until the revolution of 1917. One chapter relating to Lenin was omitted when the first "knot" was published. Other chapters which were destined for "knots" II and III (October 1916 and March 1917) were written, or partly written, by Solzhenitsyn while he was still in the USSR, and were revised and rewritten, or completed, when he found himself in Zurich, with access to sources which were not available to him before. It is these chapters which have been assembled to form the present book. It is a study of Lenin during the first world war—his arrest in Cracow, flight to Zurich, life in Zurich with its conflicts and frustrations, and negotiations with the Germans, after the collapse of the monarchy in March 1917, for his return to Russia. It is therefore a work of history, but it is also much more.

Although *August, 1914* could be described as a work of fiction, it also incorporates some historical facts and personages in its account of the first major defeat of the Russian army in the Great War. This mixture of fact and imaginative reconstruction was one of the reasons why this first volume of Solzhenitsyn's projected trilogy was at times compared to *War and Peace*, or more accurately, contrasted with it. For Tolstoy, the historical moments in the novel are subject to an inexorable destiny before which men are impotent. For Solzhenitsyn human choice and decision are the motive forces of history. In Tolstoy's case many critics, quite rightly, separated off the philosophical ideas, and his choice of historical facts, from the great human drama which bursts with the energy of genius through the framework. Turgenev, for example, deplored Tolstoy's philosophy, his tendency to embrace rather shoddy all-explaining "systems" and what he, Turgenev, regarded as inaccurate history—but welcomed *War and Peace* as the greatest novel in the language.

Although *Lenin in Zurich* is, to some extent, an amalgam of

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history and fiction, there can be no question of separating the one from the other, as in the case of *War and Peace*. In the first place the great bulk of the book is scrupulously accurate in its facts which are derived from research, of which the author indicates some of the sources. No one need be in any doubt about the authenticity of this account of some three crucial years in Lenin's life. But Solzhenitsyn is perhaps concerned less with history than with the minds and hearts of its actors, in this case Lenin—he is historian and novelist combined, who has already shown himself a master of this form of writing. I have particularly in mind Chapter 20 of *The First Circle*, which describes an interview between Stalin and his then Chief of Secret Police, Abakumov, which is imaginary—yet tells one more about Stalin's true character than a shelf full of biographies.

So it is with *Lenin in Zurich*. In his pursuit of the real Lenin (and not the cross between the boy scout leader and science fiction superman, so beloved of Soviet biographers) Solzhenitsyn searches for hidden thoughts and emotions, and probes the innermost depths of Lenin's motives. To do this he does what no historian can do: he enriches his narrative with conversations and reflections. For example, the facts which have been assembled, notably by Bertram Wolfe, show that Inessa Armand was the one love of Lenin's life. Solzhenitsyn not only portrays (as reflected in Lenin's memory) the well-known ménage à trois which Krupskaia seems to have tolerated. He also probes Lenin's thoughts in the matter: his loneliness without Inessa; the need which she fulfilled in his desolate and inhuman life; his practical acceptance of the fact that Krupskaia was the only possible wife for his kind of career; and his fears that this advocate of free love might also be practising what she preached. It is imaginary and utterly convincing. Incidentally, I wish Solzhenitsyn had done the same for Krupskaia. I have always suspected that her traditional exemplary tolerance of Inessa was a façade, and that her resentment at Vladimir's infidelity took the form of revenge on him when she frustrated his attempts during his last months, when he was totally disabled, to discredit Stalin. Another such instance is the description of the meeting of Lenin and Parvus, the megalomaniac who promised the earth in German subsidies in 1916. The meeting and the surrounding facts are authentic, the conversation between them is imaginary—and how revealing of both men.

It is beyond dispute that *Lenin in Zurich* displays all the qualities which have led to Solzhenitsyn's being acclaimed as one of the greatest writers of our time. The merits of the book are enhanced for the English reader by the superb translation—if only Solzhenitsyn had

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been as fortunate in the translators of his other works! But the question has to be posed: is this amalgam of fact and imagination justified? From the point of view of the historian the objection to it is obvious. He is strictly limited by his sources. If he reproduces conversations or thoughts they must be authenticated by reliable memoirs or by letters. Certainly, Solzhenitsyn can rightly claim that the style of Lenin's speech in his book is authentic—he lists some twelve works of Lenin in support of his claim. But, of course, Lenin never committed his intimate thoughts to paper or indeed tolerated any probing of them by others.

Nevertheless, one may well ask: if historians are precluded by the terms of their craft from probing into the unknown in this manner, who is to do it, if not the novelist? There is no doubt that our understanding of Lenin would be poorer without this book, and is not that the ultimate test?

LEONARD SCHAPIRO

IMAGES OF MODERNISM

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE: A LYRIC POET IN THE ERA OF HIGH CAPITALISM. By Walter Benjamin. Translated by Harry Zohn and Quintin Hoare. London: New Left Books.

The publication in English of anything by Walter Benjamin is or ought to be a major critical event. This volume is no exception, even though its long central essay, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire"—surely one of the greatest critical performances of this century—is but slightly revised from the translation published in *Illuminations* in 1968; and even though the remainder of the book translates posthumously published studies preliminary to the ambitious book on Paris and modern culture that remained unfinished when Benjamin, fleeing the Nazis, committed suicide in 1940. The result is occasional repetition of examples, interpretations, or even

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brief passages. But the material is so telling and the commentary on it so richly suggestive that I think no reader will complain.

Benjamin believed that cultural "modernism" reflected in specific though subtly concealed ways the experience of—and resistance to—industrial, particularly urban life. Traditional artistic forms, like lyric or narrative, originated in a different social experience: artisan work learned through practice, contemplative memory distilling experience into wisdom, religious ritual fusing the personal and the collective. In modern life, fragmented, repetitious, and mechanized production replaces handicraft; consciousness grows alert to sudden, novel events; the temporal mode of shock and crisis liquidates the organic time of tradition, memorialized in ritual and in days of remembrance. Benjamin articulates the opposition in every region of experience, asserting that industrial, urban life even alters the human sensorium: "the crisis of artistic reproduction" reflects "a crisis in perception itself." Baudelaire's problem, paradigmatic for modernism, was to write lyric poetry despite this radical and total "change in the structure of experience."

The opposition of preurban and posturban "experience" could easily become abstract and static. Benjamin fleshes the skeleton with a mass of concrete details about life in nineteenth-century Paris. He ranges from the invention of the match to the introduction of gas lighting to the construction of covered shopping arcades. Such facts seem at first anecdotal, quotidian, even trivial. Can an explanation of "modernism" rest on such epiphenomena? But though Benjamin delights in these "unspectacular social changes," he does not in fact intend to produce causal explanation. As Frederick Jameson argues, the method is, rather, allegorical. Benjamin quotes Baudelaire, "Everything becomes allegory for me." In a letter, he somewhat extravagantly claims as inspiration the Talmudic doctrine that every text of Torah has forty-nine levels of meaning. He praises Valéry's "fine eye for that cluster of symptoms called 'civilization'" (alluding, surely, to Freud's symbolic interpretation of neurotic symptoms). Bergson, Benjamin argues, turned his eyes away from the experience of large-scale industrialism in reaction to which his philosophy arose. But there persisted a complementary experience, the "spontaneous after-image" of the first, which Bergson tried to fix and record. Allegory, symptom, after-image—Benjamin applied these ideas, for example, to Baudelaire's "Le Soleil." The poet passes through deserted streets, fencing with language for his verses. Behind this image Benjamin discovers "the hidden configuration" of a man jostled by a crowd, keeping his balance like a

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fencer. And this discovery "reveals the beauty of that stanza to its very depth." For Benjamin, "beauty" as a category of modern aesthetics is precisely this play of concealment and revelation in the hidden figure.

The same poetic way of thinking is apparent in Benjamin's fondness for quoting writers on writers—Baudelaire on Musset, Gourmont on Baudelaire, Valéry on Proust. In Benjamin's text, these apparently elliptical and metaphoric remarks become suddenly lucid and exact. Charles Péguy says Victor Hugo could recognize the ancient, sacred threshold beneath the ordinary one, and Benjamin gives a stunningly precise illustration from Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The combination of indirectness and precision in poetic criticism suits Benjamin's aim, for it too shows the force of the real within poetic figures. And there is a trace here of that ideal project Benjamin once proposed, a whole volume of criticism made up of nothing but quotation—not an anthology, but a kaleidoscopic confrontation in which hidden figures would reveal their significance to the reader's imagination. Such a volume would have been less the product of research than memory's spontaneous allegory of Benjamin's reading.

In fact, "memory" and its concomitant, "tradition," play the central mediating role both in poetic creation and in criticism for Benjamin. Images from ordinary life, "implanted" in Baudelaire's memory, are not directly described in his poems, but haunt them as "secret presences." Analogously, Benjamin retraces the connnection between poetic image and ordinary life by a "chain of reflections," what Jameson aptly calls "exercises in allegorical meditation." These reflections rise to consciousness from a memory saturated in Baudelaire's poems and in the details of Parisian life. Part of Benjamin's exemplary greatness is this fresh testimony that critical ingenuity and imagination can only flourish on a memory packed with minute particulars. So deeply absorbed was Benjamin in his material that one would scarcely be surprised to find among his papers poems of his own composition indistinguishable from Baudelaire's.

It may be worthwhile to sharpen the difference between Benjamin and a Marxist like Lukács. Scorning any vulgar concentration on "content" or on an author's direct expression of political and social views, Lukács analyzes literary works to reveal the class-based ideology reflected in their "methods of composition." He asks what intellectual grasp of experience a work's means of representing reality permit. And he then evaluates the work according to how far it escapes the bourgeoisie's inevitable distortions of reality and approaches to the Marxist model of knowledge in the service of human liberation (what Lukács calls "tendentious humanism"). Lukács's "ideological" cri-

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ticism centers on the epistemology of "representation." Benjamin's "allegorical" criticism focuses rather on the "image."

In a conception which evidently owes much to Freud's theory of dreams, Benjamin asserts that new means of production give rise to images in which new and old are intermingled. Fantasy, stimulated by the new to break with the immediate past, returns to a more distant, primal past in order to image the epoch which is to succeed the present. The "materialist method" begins with these mixed images, not in order to find their "sources" either in the social milieu or in the collective unconscious, but to name the forces of new and old, truth and falsehood, which struggle within them. Benjamin seeks to view these images in relation both to "the production process in which they originated" and to "the production process in which they survive." These are the production processes of art itself as well as of society, so that in responding to innovations in daily life, artistic experiment strives towards the limits of what it can represent by traditional means and at that limit anticipates a new art form that will represent the same material effortlessly. Because Benjamin sees in the "image" a close interconnection between social development, artistic experiment, and the emergence of new art forms, he can respond to modernist technical experiments with an imaginative comprehension Lukács is incapable of. Benjamin retraces the development of modern culture instead of simply imposing by bureaucratic fiat what it may or may not do. By connecting Baudelaire's images and techniques with the concrete texture of Parisian life, Benjamin finds in him an historical lesson, not just a bad example. Benjamin does not fall into uncritical approval but does insist that "critical reading" must be the "critical revision" of just this historical lesson.

Benjamin's interpretation of modernism is, I believe, profoundly right, and it deserves the fullest possible exploration, elaboration, and testing. His method of investigation may depend too much on the unique qualities of his own spirit for others simply to take it over. Some have questioned whether Benjamin is "truly" Marxist. I think he is. His writings have the immense merit of reminding us of the potential variety of legitimate Marxist approaches to cultural phenomena. Benjamin's use of both Marx and Freud can help us see in them resources for liberating interpretations, instead of reductionist and "scientistic" models of causation. Benjamin encourages a serious criticism of modernism rather than a mindless blanket charge of "decadence." I am pleased to add that Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragedy* has now appeared in English.

DONALD MARSHALL

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TWO CHEERS FOR THE STATUS QUO

UTOPIA AND REVOLUTION: ON THE ORIGINS OF A METAPHOR, OR SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL TEMPERAMENT AND INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE AND HOW IDEAS, IDEALS, AND IDEOLOGIES HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY RELATED.
By Melvin J. Lasky. University of Chicago Press. $35.00.

It is difficult to approach a book by Melvin Lasky on the subjects of utopia and revolution without certain expectations. He has, after all, long been associated with the English intellectual journal *Encounter*, which in numerous essays both written and solicited by Lasky, has frequently made its views known on these matters. Moreover, if one recalls that Lasky was the only one of its editors to remain with *Encounter* when its links to the C.I.A. through the Congress for Cultural Freedom were revealed in 1967, these expectations are bound to be reinforced: automatically, one anticipates yet another Cold War diatribe against the follies and crimes of radical elitists. And yet, a small voice of hope cautions, a university press of the stature of Chicago is not likely to print 600 pages of text and another 100 of densely-written notes without good reason. Nor do suspicions of possible C.I.A. sponsorship last very long in the face of a $35.00 price tag ($29.95, if one was clever enough to buy before Christmas). Surely, Lasky has come up with arguments, ideas, and evidence that take us beyond the narrow world of the partisan political journalist. Or at least that is what one wants to believe before making a commitment to this formidable tome.

But alas, the reader is not very far into the book when it becomes readily apparent that it is the University of Chicago Press rather than Lasky who has let us down. For *Utopia and Revolution* is not the record of a scholarly discovery or intellectual journey into fresh insights. It is instead an unabashed polemic, far longer and more self-indulgent than it need be, in favor of the very views we knew Lasky held all along. He spells them out for us in his preface:

> Where history has taken, I feel, a profound tragic turn is in the triple error: utopia conceived as a sterile monolithic harmony; revolution as a dogmatic commitment to total change and violent reconstruction; principles of hope and belief transmogrified into an orthodoxy incompatible with heretical dissent or critical opposition. Where history provides consolation (and I, at least, feel so consoled) is in the

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> triple hope: when utopian longing is a supple changing ideal of diverse virtues and dreams; where revolution represents a reformer's open-eyed recourse to a difficult path of fundamental social reorganization, without conspiratorial self-delusion and bewitching metaphor; and where, whatever the devotion to principles of political action and ethical aspiration, there is present "the heretic's true cause"—dissent, tolerance, and a respect for humane reason.

To make his case for these propositions, which will be hauntingly familiar to readers of Camus, Popper, Orwell, *et al.*, he uses a strategy at least as old as Burke: pillorying radical intellectuals for the "tragic turns" of history. *Utopia and Revolution* is a self-proclaimed history of ideas (or ideologies) which invokes Arthur Lovejoy as its muse and disdains attempts to approach the issues it raises from a social, economic, or political vantage point. Unwilling, however, to risk comparison with the rigorous Lovejoy, Lasky calls his book "less a formal exercise in intellectual history than a kind of meteorological report" of the "intellectual climate" of the modern world. It is not clear if he intends to make some sort of ironic comment on other weathermen of recent memory, but Lasky is obviously convinced that he knows which way the wind has been blowing since that fateful moment when revolution and utopia came together in the mid-seventeenth century. Although he does allow the healthy development of one counter-trend, which will be discussed shortly, he believes that ideological attitudes towards revolution and utopia have followed certain general patterns that recur in only slightly altered forms. Because of his faith in the uniformity of this process, he feels safe in mustering evidence willy-nilly from throughout history to hammer his already well-bludgeoned points home. This approach leads to an inordinate number of lengthy citations strung together from a plethora of different sources to serve in the place of a true historical argument. Although he tries to plead indulgence in his preface for the "chrestomathic character" of his text, and in fact does present some very interesting material at times, the method does not really work. For citation and explanation are not the same thing and *Utopia and Revolution* is woefully deficient in persuasive explanation.

In fact, it is not always easy to determine where Lasky stands on a number of fundamental issues, and not only because the organization of the book lacks any discernable logic. For Lasky is anxious to avoid leaving any of his bets unhedged. Thus, for example, he tells us that the well-worn claim that Marxism is a secular religion is "often taken over in a pejorative manner by anti-Marxist pamphleteers" before he takes us through a convoluted argument the not very startling conclu-

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sion of which is that Marxism "is in reality a political religion." Likewise, he tells us that he wants to avoid the fashionable reduction of all motivation to the unconscious and with it the equation of radicalism with personal neurosis, while at the same time "suggesting the persistence of the pathological theme in the cycles of ideology." Similarly, he tries in several footnotes to put some light between his position and its more extreme versions in the work of Popper, Talmon, and Hayek, but by the end of the book what one remembers are the obvious similarities rather than the differences. And finally, he admits in passing that "the objective sources of revolution are in a world's misery," presumably to fend off the obvious objection to his idealist bias, but when it comes to probing the implications of that admission, he remains silent. For even though he assures us that he knows that "great social movements in history are rarely explained by the ideas, sound or illusory, with which they are associated," he shows no signs of explaining them otherwise.

But despite these attempted hedges, a familiar argument does finally get through. The "revolutionification" (sic) of utopia, he tells us, was rooted in the bewitchment of metaphorical thinking which harkens back to "primitive word magic." Dominated by "the metaphorical imperative," revolution has "now as then, been close to the spark and the fire, the river and the torrent, the storm and the whirlwind, the volcano and the earthquake, and above all the circles of time and the progressions of the very heavens." These "rhetorical reifications" are repeated in different generations as the cycle of revolutionary fervor, momentary triumph, schismatic heresy, and ultimate disillusionment plays itself out in different circumstances, but with essentially the same result. Why revolutionary utopians after 1700 are more prone to the seduction of metaphors Lasky does not pause to tell us, nor does he consider the power of metaphor in other traditions, for example, the conservative with its fondness for organic analogies. But it is clear that he thinks that if not for this linguistic villain, we all would have been spared a great deal of pain: "the tragedy," Lasky tells us, "is the unnecessary explosion. . . . One thinks of 1789 and 1917, of Bonaparte and of Stalin, and one can only mourn for the sacrifice of generations."

There is, to be sure, interspersed between liberal pieties of this sort the occasional point of merit. For example, Lasky's attention to the function of metaphor leads him to observe that the adoption of the word "revolution" from celestial mechanics may have something to do with the "ritualistic process of legitimizing human acts through

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extrahuman models." And because he takes the astronomical origins of the term seriously, he draws our attention to figures like Giordano Bruno whose role in the transference of the idea from the heavens to the earth was a pivotal one. We are also in his debt for rescuing certain historical actors such as Marchamont Nedham, Sir James Mackintosh, and Henry Yorke from relative obscurity, although it is no accident that he admires them for their turn away from the revolutionary infatuations of their early years. And finally, we must be grateful for his insistence that we take the revolutionary sentiments of more familiar figures such as Dante and Milton seriously. How seriously, of course, only scholars more expert than I on these men must judge, but Lasky is to be commended for amassing the evidence he does.

And yet, there are simply too few of these praiseworthy moments amidst the welter of banal judgments and assertions that make up the main part of this bloated book. For all his "thousands of forays into the St. James Square stacks of the London Library and the reading room of the British Museum," Lasky has not produced a true work of scholarship. *Utopia and Revolution*, to improve a bit on Bolingbroke's famous definition of history, is ideology teaching by example. In fact, the term "ideology," normally used pejoratively, is seized on by Lasky to characterize the vision he identifies as his own, which is that one alternative to the sorry pattern of metaphorical bewitchment mentioned above. This alternative he calls "the English Ideology" and he claims to find it operative as early as the first English utopian, Sir Thomas More, in the sixteenth century. It emerges, however, full blown only in the aftermath of the seventeenth-century civil war and comes to final maturity in the progressively disillusioned decade of the 1790s. The English Ideology, Lasky tells us, values moderation, common sense, sobriety, prudence, and reform. Eschewing extremism and enthusiasm, it means retreating to the vital center of political discourse where the illusions of revolutionary fanaticism are exposed for what they really are. The result is a readiness for compromise and accommodation that is sadly absent elsewhere.

Now the English have been congratulating themselves for these virtues for some time and so we expect Lasky to offer a new and interesting explanation for what, after all, is a commonplace observation. It is here, however, that *Utopia and Revolution* is at its most disappointing, for all Lasky can come up with is:

> The language of the English ideology tended to reflect the temper and the natural conceits of an island people soberly preoccupied with its struggle against the elements. The English gardener wanted

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> to prune; the English mechanic to tinker; the English carpenter to repair, etc.

And then to show that he too can be bewitched by a metaphor, Lasky adds in a footnote:

> The natural conceits of an island people reinforced the English ideology; but the stormier spirits on the French side of the channel could not be so quietly contained, as if the Continental landmass were so far removed from nautical realities.

This, alas, is all the explanation Lasky provides. We hear nothing of Barrington Moore's argument that the violent revolution of the seventeenth century was the necessary trial through which England had to pass before discovering its ideology of moderation; or of Bernard Bailyn's more recent thesis that the American Revolution and the migrations to the new world helped defuse a revolutionary potential in the eighteenth century; or even of Elie Halévy's much older argument that Methodism was largely responsible in the nineteenth century for the triumph of reform over revolution. Nor, of course, do we hear anything of E.P. Thompson's claim that nineteenth-century England was full of examples of a most immoderate radicalism, culminating in the figure of William Morris, a utopian revolutionary Lasky curiously ignores except for one passing reference. What we get instead is the geopolitics of national temperament, which the reader doubts even Lasky takes very seriously.

What he does take with utmost seriousness, however, is his ability to make sweeping judgments of the type that stigmatizes almost all revolutionaries as well-to-do creatures of fantasy foisting their utopian dreams on the poor and oppressed, whom he dubs "rebels." "Revolution," he writes, "is the conspiracy of an elite and is, thus, the enemy of genuine popular reform." This generalization is taken from one of his *Encounter* columns, quoted at length in a footnote which acknowledges that he is expressing a personal viewpoint. It is clear that Lasky is at his happiest when free to air his personal biases. He should then remain a political journalist, where perhaps his readers will indulge him in vapid generalities of this kind. For *Utopia and Revolution* gives little credence to the pretension that he is anything more.

MARTIN JAY

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LETTERS

An Exchange

EDITORS:

Richard Schlatter's engaging but remarkably ingenuous account (*PR* 4, '77) of being a Communist at Harvard in the 1930s contains an error which may be worth correcting, considering the attention which the Harvard situation of those days continues to receive. "Granville Hicks," Schlatter writes, "told me he had formed a small Harvard Faculty Communist group and asked me to join."

Actually Hicks did not form the group. When I, a Harvard instructor, joined the Communist party about a year and a half before this, I entered a Cambridge unit which included both townspeople and teachers. Membership was increasing rapidly because of the Popular Front and the Spanish Civil War. Meanwhile the newspapers and the Massachusetts legislature were whipping up a scare about Red teachers in the schools and colleges. So the Harvard and MIT teachers were split off into two separate secret cells. This occurred about a year before Hicks came to Harvard, transferring from the unit he belonged to in Troy, New York.

That our secrecy at Harvard was well-preserved is proved by the fact that one member of our unit, a physicist, could join the atomic bomb project at Los Alamos during the war. Another of our members, who later worked on classified war projects as a major in the Canadian army, supplied descriptions of those projects to the Russians. This was revealed by documents turned over to Canadian authorities by the Russian defector Gouzenko. In our former colleague's notebook was found the name and address of the German Communist atomic spy, Klaus Fuchs.

I mention these facts to suggest that our Harvard group was not so remote from the realities of international Communism as Schlatter's genial reminiscences propose. We had to swallow the whole business of the Moscow show trials, which were at their worst in this period. After August, 1939, we were to have plenty of time to reflect on the willful self-blinding required for adherence to Stalinism and to most of its front organizations.

The term "Stalinism," of which Schlatter recalls being innocently unaware, was one that the Trotskyites, our most vituperative opponents, never let us forget. But in our circles we preferred the synonym, "defense of the Soviet Union." The functionaries who visited us hammered away relentlessly at the theme that to permit any criti-

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cism of any aspect of Soviet Communism, including the public adoration of Stalin, was to "play into the hands of the class enemy."

Because of the dominance of the slogan "Defend the Soviet Union" during the years that I was in the Party, I was not surprised at the readiness of American Communists, like those in the Washington Ware groups, to transmit secret information to Russia, or at the fact that Noel Field, having fled to Hungary from the investigations here only to be imprisoned there for several years by the hard-line Stalinist regime, should stoutly defend the use of Russian tanks to rescue that regime from popular anger.

Robert Gorham Davis

Mr. Schlatter Replies:

Bob Davis is confusing his past with mine. He apparently belonged to a Cambridge Communist group which included townspeople and MIT faculty. I did not, and I never heard of such a group. I belonged to a group composed exclusively of Harvard Faculty and we were rarely hammered by "functionaries"—Granville Hicks was our link with the C.P. outside.

Bob Davis says that someone whom he does not name gave classified information to the Russians. I never heard of that before and find it hard to believe that it was anyone I knew in the Harvard group. He also sees something sinister in the fact that a physicist member of our group worked during the war at Los Alamos. The only physicist in our group I knew was Wendell Furry. I do not know what he did during the war, but after the war he continued as a distinguished professor of physics at Harvard, surviving the onslaughts of the Un-American Activities Committee. If he did work at Los Alamos during the war, that proves, not that our secrecy was well-preserved but that no one cared much in those days about past political activity. When I was hired by the OSS—in the end I did not take the job—there was no security investigation that I was aware of.

Finally, unlike Bob Davis, I would have been very surprised to learn that he, or anyone else I knew at Harvard, had been seduced into becoming a spy.

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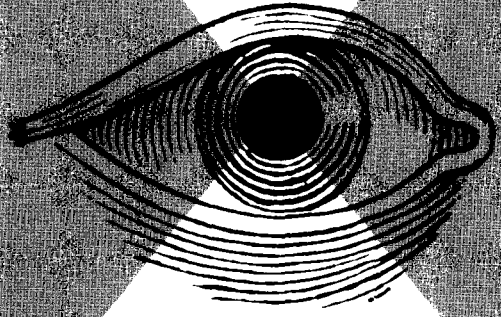

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